

ENHANCING EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY THROUGH EFFECTIVE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN TRANSMISSION COMPANY OF NIGERIA

C.G.E SALAMI,

Delta State University, Department of Business Administration, Abraka, Nigeria

Felix ORISHEDE,

Delta State University, Department of Business Administration, Abraka, Nigeria

&

Ogor MORKA,

Delta State University, Department of Business Administration, Abraka, Nigeria

Abstract

This study investigated the impact of conflict management on employees' productivity in a public sector organisation, a case of Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN). This study adopted the survey research design. A total of 100 respondents were selected for the study using stratified sampling technique. Questionnaire was used to collect primary data. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics. Hypotheses were tested through regression analysis and correlation coefficient. The findings revealed that effective conflict management enhance employee's performance in an organisation and that organisation's conflict management system influences employee performance in the organisation. It was recommended that organisation should embark on training and retraining of its employees in area of conflict management so as to create a conducive working environment for the employees and that there should be efficient and effective communication between and among all categories of the employees in the organisation. This will reduce conflicting situations in the organisation.

Keywords: *Conflict Management, Employee Productivity, Working Environment.*

DOI: 10.31039/jgss.v3i12.113

1. Introduction

Conflicts come because of disagreements. They are part of everyone's life from childhood with parents, teenagers in school and usually carried on to the workplace from home. The trends of

business and organizational conflicts which are resulting in their breakdown and loss are an area that needs special attention to preserve and increase their profitability.

The solution to these problems is good management skills which can be implemented. This essay will discuss the conflicts between management and employees in organizations. It will include the eight strategies by Kenneth Cloke and Joan Smith in their book, “Resolving Conflicts at work: Strategies for everyone on the job.”

The process involves, “organizational change, managing change, change implementation, multicultural, change resistance, readiness for change, coping with change, communication, involvement, middle management, case study, change factors, intercultural management and involving change agents” (Savolainen, 2011, p. 1).

The process of conflict management in organizations requires determination and participation of two parties, employees, and the management. Employees need a good working environment with adequate working equipment; with each employee’s work clearly defined. Failure of management to provide appropriate working conditions may lead to disagreement between the employees. The employees should also learn to understand each other, with respect while appreciating their work and personality.

This builds a strong team. If the leadership fails by being unfair or having poor values in an organization or business, this would be another source of conflict. To enhance harmony and teamwork the above factors must be put at the right place by the management (McNamara, n.d.).

Statement of Problem

Conflict can occur in any organization when employees with different backgrounds and priorities work together. Conflict can be expressed in numerous ways such as insults, noncooperation, bullying and anger. Its causes can range from personality clashes and misunderstood communication to organizational mismanagement. The negative effects of workplace conflict can include work disruptions, decreased productivity, project failure, absenteeism, turnover and termination. Emotional stress can be both a cause and an effect of workplace conflict. Workplace conflict is inevitable when employees of various backgrounds

and different work styles are brought together for a shared business purpose. Conflict can—and should—be managed and resolved. With tensions and anxieties at an all-time high due to the current political divide and racial inequity discussions at work, the chances for workplace conflict have increased. This study examines the effects of conflict management on employee's productivity.

Objectives

- I. To ascertain the effect of organizational conflict on employees productivity.
- II. To determine the relationship between effective control management and employee's productivity

Research Questions

- i. How does organizational conflict influence employee's productivity?
- ii. What is the relationship between effective conflict management style and employee productivity?

2. Review of Related Literature

The Concept of Conflict

One important task of management is to create an environment in which individuals and groups of people can cooperate with one another to achieve their goals and the goals of the organisation. Yet one persistent problem in organisations is that individuals and work groups compete for limited resources, power, status, etc. to the extent that their competition leads to disruption (or even enhancement) of cooperative endeavours. These competitions (bad or good) are generally referred to as conflicts.

Schramm-Nielsen (2002) defines a conflict as a state of serious disagreement and argument about something perceived to be important by at least one of the parties involved. According to Fajana (1995), conflict can be defined as a disagreement between two or more parties who perceive that they have incompatible concerns. It exists whenever an action by one party is perceived as preventing or interfering with the goals, needs or actions of another party. Conflict can be regarded as a reality of management and organisational behaviour and can be related to power and politics. Mullins (2005) sees conflict as behaviour intended to obstruct the achievement of some other person's goals. According to this author, conflict is based on the

incompatibility of goals and arises from opposing behaviours. It can be viewed at the individual, group, or organisational level.

Conflicts exist whenever an action by one party is perceived as preventing or interfering with the goals, needs, or actions of another party. Conflict can arise over a multiple of organisational experiences, such as incompatible goals, differences in the interpretation of facts, negative feelings, differences of values and philosophies, or disputes over shared resources. As defined above conflict tends to be associated with negative features and situations which give rise to inefficiency, ineffectiveness, or dysfunctional consequences. But in some cases, it can stimulate creative problem solving and improve the situation for all parties involved. In this article, we simply view organisational conflict as competition between individuals and groups for organisational resources and organisational rewards.

Since industrial relations basically aims at the relationship among various actors in the workplace, it then becomes necessary to examine the causes and effects of conflict and to provide insights into how such relationship could be adequately performed.

Sources of Organisational Conflict

For conflict to occur, certain conditions must exist. It is thus imperative to understand the underlying conditions that can cause conflict. In the words of Fajana, conflicts can arise over a multiple of organisational experiences, such as incompatible goals, differences of values and philosophies or disputes over shared resources. Conflict is perception, so it begins when someone believes that another might obstruct his or her efforts. Conflict could arise because of the employer's quest to maximise profit while the workers representatives are out to ensure continuous improved condition of living for their member's conflict could also arise because of failure to honour agreed items on collective bargaining. Damachi emphasizes those workers' rights and employers' prerogatives which when trampled upon, could cause conflict. These include pay, condition of services etc. Armstrong sees changes as another cause of conflict. Changes according to him are always with us but it is not always welcome. Resistance to change is natural and it arises because of habit once established, fear of the unknown, conformity to customary expected ways of behaviour, misunderstanding of implications of change and individual differences. Unless, it is well managed, he said, it could lead to conflict

or even crises. Other causes of organisational conflict are competition for scarce resources, status incongruity, win-lose situations, the need for change, ambiguous rules and communication problems among others.

Strategies for Conflict Management

A positive approach to organisational conflict is that it is necessary. Accordingly, opposition to ideas should be explicitly encouraged and both the stimulation and resolution of conflict should be encouraged. Even if this view is not held by management, conflict in organisations is inevitable.

This inevitability of conflict is caused by forces residing both inside and outside the organisation. The external environments of the organisation sometimes change in ways that necessitate a reshuffling of priorities and resources allocation among internal subunits, and stimulate shifts in the balance of power and patterns of influence between them.

Therefore, instead of avoiding conflict, organisations should endeavour to manage or reduce them to the benefit of the organisation. There are several managerial strategies used in managing conflict, and essentially, they are directed at its cause, these include:

Controlling the Context: To minimise conflict that arises out of organisational design and layout strategies, management must formulate sound procedural strategies to institutionalise and channel conflict. If conflicts are inevitable and normal in organisational life, then proper procedures for solving them must be established.

Controlling the Issue in Dispute: The attempt here is to issue in an attempt to resolve the dispute. This involves separating issues into their smallest components and dealing with them separately to make it easier to resolve major disputes. Fractioning conflict issues helps to avoid stalemate by making it possible for one party to concede on one issue without feeling it has lost the contest.

Controlling the Relationship Directly: In adapting this strategy, management hopes to change the attitudes of the group members or individuals toward each other. This approach is more functional in inter-group conflict. Management directly intervenes in the dispute by physically separating the unit involved on holding direct negotiations between the units or individual or formally requiring intense interaction.

Altering the Individual Involved: Because altering the individual personality is much more difficult than altering his position in the organisation, it may be feasible to swap the individuals in dispute.

Develop a Common Set of Goal: Much of the conflict between groups in any social organization arises because the subsystems have different goals. Most managers are rewarded through pay increases, promotions etc to the extent that they accomplish the goals and the objectives of their particular subsystem is concerned about making itself look good and is also concerned about working with other subsystems towards common goals and objectives. An approach known as the “the organisational confrontation meeting” is developed by Beckhard to encourage organisational subsystems to work towards establishing and striving for common goals.

3. Conflict Resolution in Nigeria

This is the focal point of this study. It could be defined as the tools, methods, art or style of handling conflict. A union leader PHCN once said the best way to manage conflict is to prevent crises. Other methods of conflict resolution are discussed below.

Joint Consultation: This is a powerful tool for resolving conflicts. Joint consultation could be defined as a meeting between the workers and their employers where the relationships is seen not as terms of bargaining strength but in terms of their worth and ability to contribute to the subject being discussed. Hence, discussions focus on mutual interest to both sides. Subjects like welfare, canteen, safety, productivity and so on are discussed. It is perhaps the joint benefit to be derived from such meeting that makes joint consultation suitable for discussing problems in industry.

Mediation: The Trade Disputes Act of 1976 and amended by the Trade Disputes (Amendment) Act of 1977. Section 3 of the Act, provides a comprehensive process of dispute settlement aside the internal procedure. Under this Act, if the attempt to settle the disputes through enterprise's own machinery and procedures fails, the party shall within 7 days of failure meet together either by themselves or through their representatives under the presidency of a mediator to settle the disputes amicably.

Collective Bargaining: One important attribute of collective bargaining is that it is based on the principle of voluntarism. This means that both employees and management are expected to voluntarily iron out their differences.

Conciliation: A conciliator is appointed to look into the cases and circumstances of the disputes between employees and management and by negotiation with the parties attempt to bring about a settlement.

Arbitration: The arbitration procedure is generally time consuming, but it has the advantage of encouraging parties. In the interim, the Head of State or the Minister of labour can make the arbitration obligatory and binding if the possibility of a strike action is considered familiar to public order or against the general interest, as in cases involving essential service.

4. Employees Performance in Organisation

The traditional human resource management approach to enhancing workers' performance has centred on the assessment of past performance and the allocation of reward. That is, rewards were provided in exchange for performance. It is inevitable that workers' performance improvement is something of direct interest only to management. Performance therefore becomes stereotyped as something of no intrinsic interest to the person doing the work. Performance is a reward. There are many small initiatives every day that help to improve workers' performance. It is critical that the organisation selects the most useful measure of performance for the organisation as a whole and for the individuals within it. Single measures are unlikely to be sufficiently robust. Kaplan and Norton (1992) argue convincingly that the mix of measures which an organisation should use to assess its workers performance should be based around four different perspectives:

Financial Measures: Such as sales growth, profits, cash flow and increased market share.

Customer Measures: That is, the customer perspective, which looks at, for example, delivery time, service quality, product quality.

Internal Business Measures: Cycle time, productivity employee skills, labour turnover.

Innovation and Learning Perspective: Including such elements as ability to innovate and improve.

The focus must be on what is achieved: results are what count.

Views On Conflict

There are various perceptions regarding conflicts. Conflict is a reality in everyone's life and should be considered a natural process that occurs daily. As a group performs its assigned tasks, conflict inevitably arises (Robins, et al, 2003). Conflict is viewed as natural due to life's uncertainty. Conflict is good and necessary because it can stimulate innovative thinking when it is managed in the right way. Lacking conflict, thoughts and actions are performed because they are habitual. Conflict allows an examination of the necessity of these thoughts and actions. People find it easier to live with unresolved misunderstanding than facing the fact that fundamental differences do exist, and demand recognition and appropriate management. Conflicts are an integral part of a human's life in all aspects. One cannot avoid conflicts in families, at work or even when watching the news on television (Viletta Bankovs Kay, 2012). Historically, the following views on conflict are identified:

Traditional View

One school of thought says that conflict must be avoided as it reflects malefaction within the group. Conflict is viewed negatively and is associated with violence and destruction. Conflict is a result of poor communication and a lack of trust between people. Conflict can be eliminated or resolved only at high level of management. According to this view, all conflicts should be avoided. Thus, there is need to pay attention to causes of conflict and correct them to improve group and organization performance (Robins, 2005). Most conflicts have negative connotations, invoke negative feelings and often lead to destruction. Whether the effect of conflict is good or bad depends on the strategies used to deal with it.

The Human Relations or Contemporary View

Conflict is a natural occurrence in all groups. The human relations school accepts conflict. It believes that conflict may benefit a group's performance (Robbins, 2005). Dispute happens from time to time, and it is not wise to put too much effort into avoiding or preventing the conflict. Concentrating only on large or critical conflicts allows people to resolve the conflict in a better and more effective way (Leung, 2010). According to this view, conflict is seen as a

natural and inevitable outcome of people working together in groups and teams. Thus it need not necessarily be viewed negatively, but rather positively as a potential force in contributing to the performance of individuals (Robbins, et al, 2003).

The Interactionist View

According to this view, conflict is not only a positive force, but is also necessary for an individual to perform effectively. Resolving conflicts means challenging normal processes and procedures to improve individual productivity or introduce innovative systems (Robbins, et al, 2003). Conflict is necessary to perform effectively, but not all conflicts are good. This school of thought has identified several types of conflict: - task conflict, relates to the content and goals of the work; relationship conflict, which focuses on interpersonal relationships; and - process conflict, which relates to how the work gets done (Robbins, 2005). The interactionists interpret conflict in a totally different way from traditionalists and people with a contemporary view. According to interactionists, conflict can be identified as either dysfunctional or functional. Conflict is a part of people's lives and a natural phenomenon in all organizations. A low level of conflict will not be harmful for daily operations but will help to create smooth functioning by better understanding of existing issues. Conflict at the desired level can inspire creativity when handling issues and resolving conflict. Thus, conflict can be positive in work environments, but whenever a critical or major conflict occurs, it should be resolved as the undesired level of conflict can be harmful and dysfunctional for the organization (Leung, 2010).

5. Methodology

In this study, survey research design was used. Data were collected from sampled employees of organizations selected for the study to determine the relationship between employee productivity (dependent variable) and conflict management (independent variable). This study examines Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN) where their staff constitutes the study population. Simple random sampling method was used in selecting our respondents. This method gives every employee of the organization equal chance of being selected as part of the sample elements. The sample size selected is 115 employees out of which 100 respondents filled and returned the questionnaire for our analysis. This means that we have 87% response rate. To ensure the validity of the research instrument for this study, content validity which deals with item validity and sampling validity is used to ensure adequate by the instrument of

the scope implied by the subject of study. In addition, experts in the field also helped in the evaluation of the question items of the instrument and adequacy of the sampled elements of the population by the measuring instrument used (Ojo, 2003). The judgement that an instrument is measuring what it is supposed to is primarily based upon the logical link between the questions and the objectives of the study. In this study, the test-retest reliability was used to check the degree of consistency of the instrument. This was done by distributing questionnaires on two different occasions to determine the level of consistency. The results obtained were not the same but highly correlated which implies that the research instrument is reliable for the research work. Data collected through the questionnaire were analysed using descriptive statistics while regression, Pearson product moment coefficient of correlation and student's t-test were employed to test the hypotheses and establish the relationship between conflict management and its implications on employee productivity.

6. Analysis and Discussion of Results

This section of the study presents the major results that emanated from the test of hypotheses. Relevant data gotten from the field through the questionnaire that deals with the objectives of the study were analysed and interpreted accordingly. The research hypotheses were also tested to determine their validity or otherwise. Each hypothesis was, however, tested separately to determine its relevance in the light of the available evidence from data gathered and analysed in this study. The two hypotheses were tested with the aid of regression analysis and correlation coefficient.

Hypothesis 1

Ho: Effective conflict management does not affect employee's productivity

H1: Effective conflict management affects employee's productivity

Employee productivity will be affected because of conflict in an organization

Null hypothesis (Ho)	Tcal	Ttab	Df	Decision
Effective conflict management does not affect employee productivity	6.78	2.35	0.05	Reject Ho and Accept Hi

Decision Rule: The decision rule here is to reject Ho if T-calculated is greater than T-

table ($t\text{-cal} > t\text{-tab}$). Therefore, the above table depicts the t-calculated to be 6.78 while the t-table is 2.35. This shows that effective conflict management affects employee morale and this will affect employee’s performance in an organisation. The null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected while the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted.

Hypothesis 2

Ho: Conflict management system does not influence employee performance in an organisation

H1: Conflict management system influence employee performance in an organisation.

Conflict in an organisation will lead to low employee productivity

Null hypothesis (Ho)	Tcal	Ttab	Df	Decision
Conflict management system does not influence employee productivity in an organisation	7.39	2.35	0.05	Reject Ho and Accept Hi

Decision Rule:

The decision rule here is to reject Ho if T-calculated is greater than T-table ($t\text{-cal} > t\text{-tab}$). Therefore, the above table depicts the t-calculated to be 6.78 while the t-table is 2.35. This shows that conflict management systems influence employee productivity in an organisation and this will lead to low employee performance. Thus the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected and alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted.

7. Conclusion

For an organisation to grow effectively and efficiently it depends on the way it manages the conflict within its organisation. Having studied the opinions of the various stakeholders as far as this research is concerned, it should be noted that the employees should be flexible and should direct their energy towards the achievement of organisational goals and objectives. It should be more than a target, against which performance is routinely assessed, in viable and vibrant plan for success of the organisation. This research work has effectively addressed the effect of conflict management on employee productivity in a public sector organisation like (TCN). That the existence of the organisation can be threatened by conflict among the

different level of management in the organisation. This research work analysis the clear picture of important role which conflict management play on employee morale and the entire organisation in the public sector (TCN). In view of this, the researchers rightly conclude that if the organisation can effectively and efficiently manage conflict within its operation, this will lead to high level of organisational productivity which will result into achievement of the organisational goals and objectives. Successfully managing conflict has a domino effect, allowing managers to create a workplace where employees can thrive.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, following recommendations have been made:

- 1.The organisation should embark on training and retraining as well as efficient and effective communication between and among all categories of the employees in conflict management to create a conducive working environment for the employees.
2. Problems of shared resources among the employees by the management should be dealt with before it affects the performance of the organisation. Also policies should be formulated that will ensure that conflicts that may occur within the organisation are quickly resolved

REFERENCES

- Azamosa Oye(2004). *Industrial Conflict in Nigerian Universities: The case of the Academic Staff Union of the University Teacher's Strike of December2002 - June 2003*. Dept. of Sociology, Anthropology and Applied Social Sciences, Bristol University.
- Denmark. Mullins, L. J. (2005). *Management and Organisational Behaviour*, 7th Edition, Essex: Prentice-Hall.
- Kinicki, A. & Kreithner, R. (2008). *Organizational Behaviour: Key Concepts, Skills and Best Practice*. New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies.

Knapp P.(1994). *World-Many Worlds: Contemporary Sociological Theory*. Harper College Div: pp 228-246.

Leung, Yu Fai (2009). *Conflict Management and Educational Intelligence*. Unpublished Thesis for Degree of Business Administration, Southern Cross University, Lismor.

McShane, S.L. & Von Glinow, M.A. (2003). *Organizational Behaviour: Emerging Realities for Workplace Revolution*, Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Mcshane, S.L & Glinow, M.A. (2008). *Organizational Behaviour*. New York: McGraw – Hill Companies.

Ojo, O. (2003). *Fundamentals of Research Methods*. Lagos: Standard Publications.

Schramm-Nielsen, J. (2002) “Conflict Management in Scandinavia” Department of International Communication and Management, Copenhagen Business School,