

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT IN TRANSMISSION COMPANY OF NIGERIA (TCN), OSUN STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

Purpose: This study discussed the influence of conflict management strategies on organisational involvement among employees of the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), Osogbo. It establishes how involvement can be enhanced through a good conflict management strategy adopted in the workplace. **Methods:** The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. A total of 174 respondents were selected through a simple random sampling technique from the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), Osogbo region. 71 (50.7%) of these respondents were male, while 69 (49.3%) were female. Influence of conflict management strategies scale (ICMSS) was adapted and modified while the employee involvement scale (EIS), which was developed by Kanungo (1982), was adopted. The test-retest reliability of the instrument administered within a two-week interval yielded 0.78. The instrument used the Likert response format, with options ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Strongly Disagree (SD) = 2, and Disagree (D) = 1. Data collected was analysed using Regression Analysis. **Findings:** The findings establish a significant relationship between conflict management strategies (competition, cooperation, compromise, alternative dispute resolution, and collective bargaining) and organisational involvement. The findings also show that conflict management strategies (competition, cooperation, alternative dispute resolution, and collective bargaining) make no significant contribution to organisational involvement. It was further revealed a statistically significant difference between male and female respondents' perceptions of organisational involvement. **Conclusion:** The study concluded that a positive and significant relationship between conflict management strategies and employee involvement is realisable when alternative

*dispute resolution strategies are adopted among workers for harmonious coexistence. **Recommendation:** The study recommended that management and employees work together amicably by formulating powerful strategies and sustaining acceptable policies as an effective mechanism for managing conflict continuously in organisations through alternative dispute resolution. Credible channels of communication and open discussions of conflict in work relations must be encouraged to avoid confrontation, competition, and domination as conflict management strategies.*

Keywords: Employee Involvement, Conflict, Conflict Management Strategies.

INTRODUCTION

The structurally differentiated characteristics of contemporary work–organisations, whether in the manufacturing or the service industry, inevitably generate conflicts of interest. These conflicts of interest arise in groups because of the scarcity of freedom, position, and resources (Hotepo, Asokere, Abdul-Azeez, and Ajemunigbohun, 2010). Workplace conflict is thus endemic despite the best management practices in organisations and manifests in various forms as an intrinsic and unavoidable feature of the employment relationship. It is, by definition, an ongoing process that is more likely to occur in hierarchical organisations where people with differing perspectives, opinions, and backgrounds interact. However, conflict in work-relations is not an aberration since it creates or provides an opportunity for correction and reconciliation for the betterment of both the organisation and the workers (Osad and Osas, 2013).

According to Kazimoto (2013), workplace conflict is the presence of discord that occurs when different individuals or groups' goals, interests, or values are incompatible and frustrate each other's attempts to achieve objectives in an organisation. It is a communication process and an inevitable consequence of transactional relationships manifesting in disagreement and dissonance with and between individuals and groups in the work environment. In this context, workplace conflict is a fact of life in any organisation as long as people compete for jobs, power, recognition, and security (Adomie and Anie, 2005). Therefore, the task of management is to resolve conflicts and manage them and not to affect the involvement of the organisation. Based on Akanji (2005), managed conflict promotes productive performance, while destructively managed conflict creates dislocation and polarisation of the entire group, reducing productivity and job performance. The above analysis suggests that effectively managed conflicts encourage organisational improvement to boost employees' performance at work. Furthermore, through good conflict management strategies, weaknesses in organisational decision-making are exposed, which may prompt the establishment to effect changes and search for positive solutions. Hence, management is duty-bound to resolve a conflict correctly for the sake of increasing employee involvement because the outcome of such action will result in good communication, time management, good cooperation, and increased corporate productivity (Obasan, 2011).

Conflict in an employment relationship has been an issue of continuing interest and debate. Conflict is a common occurrence in organisational life. It occurs when a desired goal or objective is the desire to obtain more in both economic (wages and benefits) and non-economic (contract provisions and operation practices) areas. The labour union also anticipates making these gains

through collective bargaining, grievance and arbitration procedures, and management defaults. On the other hand, the organised private sector resists all efforts of the union to restrict management freedom to make the necessary to run the business profitably. Conflict in the organised private sector, like banks, is endemic, and various procedures have been developed to resolve these disputes. One of such procedures lies in the institutionalisation of grievance devices like the collective resolution of these conflicts determines the organisation's success or otherwise. Organisational leaders need to manage conflicts between individuals to have a positive effect on an organisation. Studies on conflict management and organisational involvement have been conducted (Adebile & Ojo, 2012; Osisioma, Osisioma, & Chukwuemeka, 2012; Bankole & Lawal, 2012; Fatile & Adejuwon, 2011; Ige, Adeyeye, & Aina, 2011; Obasan, 2011). However, little or none appears to have established the influence of conflict management strategies in terms of competition results; this research was carried out to fill a knowledge gap.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Conflicts in organisations have destabilising effects on the overall performance of the organisation. It leads to underperformance since valuable time and resources (human and material) are used to control and manage conflicts rather than enhance effectiveness and involvement. Conflicts also lead to interpersonal disharmony in the organisation, making attaining organisational goals more difficult. Attaining organisational involvement and effectiveness is possible if efforts are always made to reduce the overall level of conflict within the organisation.

It was reported that there was a conflict between Power Distribution Companies and Transmission Companies in Nigeria over the recurring equipment protection challenges. On different occasions, DISCOS and TCN have blamed each other for deploying inferior equipment protection gadgets in the power system (Punch, 2020). It means that lack of equipment leads to industrial conflict in TCN, which the involvement of the. Consequently, efforts must be made towards finding ways of effectively managing conflict to achieve organisational involvement and effectiveness. The purpose of this study is to fill a gap in the literature by determining the impact of conflict management strategies (competition, cooperation, alternative dispute resolution, and collective bargaining) on employee involvement in the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN) Osun State, Nigeria.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to determine the influence of conflict management strategies on employee involvement in the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), Osun State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. determine the relationship between cooperation strategy and employee involvement in the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN),

- ii. evaluate the influence of competition strategy on employee involvement in the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN),
- iii. examine the impact of collective bargaining strategy on employee involvement in the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), and
- iv. ascertain the impact of alternative dispute resolution strategies on employee involvement in the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), Osun State.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Concept of Conflict Management

Conflict is unavoidable among humans, whether at home, church, or in an organisation, especially when two or more individuals, groups, or organisations interact, owing to differences in individual perceptions, goals, interests, ideas, feelings, values, and so on that conflict with each other (John-Eke & Akintokunbo, 2020). Therefore, every organisation in society focuses on creating a conducive environment where employees can carry out their duties effectively without any negative influence that could hinder individual and organisational goals. Nevertheless, conflict in organisations has become unavoidable because employees contend for authority, position, recognition, limited resources. No wonder, Bercovitch (2019), posits that conflict is an inevitable part of living because it is connected to states of scarce resources, division of functions, power relations and role differentiation. These disagreements frequently result in conflict, which can be either dysfunctional or functional due to the employee's involvement.

Conflict management strategies refer to those techniques or approaches that can be used to prevent, control, or resolve conflicts. Conflict management strategies are essential for any school because, through these strategies, the adverse effects resulting from conflicts can be minimised or controlled. There exist several strategies that could be used to resolve conflicts in schools. These include dominance, compromise, synergy, the culture of civility, win-lose strategy, lose-lose strategy, win-win strategy (Anashie & Kulo, 2014); adjudication, collective bargaining, confrontation, problem-solving, creation of the budget committee, separation device, neglect or silence, clarification of interdependencies, consultation, boxing the problem, clarification of goals, and prayer (Ihvarulam, 2015). The focus of this study is on three conflict management strategies: arbitration, dialogue, and effective communication conflict management strategies.

2.2 Conflict Management Strategies

The timely identification of the nature and significance of sources of conflicts in an organisation is the significant step in developing conflict management strategies (Elmagri & Eaton, 2011). The best technique for managing conflicts in an organisation is to focus on enhancing constructive functions to optimise employee involvement. Therefore, it is essential to identify all levels of conflict in an organisation, be they individual, interpersonal or intergroup conflicts. We should also bear in mind that every organisation has its technique of managing conflict with the sole aim of survival. Uchendu, Anijaobi, and Odigwe (2013) argued that since conflict is unavoidable in organisations, management determines whether it positively or negatively affects

employee involvement. Therefore, proper recognition and immediate clarification of the underlying tension before the conflict ensues or escalates translates to effective management of conflict in an organisation.

Some of the early scholars who took an interest in conflict and conflict management strategies include Follett (1926-1940), Blake and Mouton (1964), Thomas (1976). Follett, as cited in Tabitha and Florence (2019), proposed three main strategies for managing interpersonal conflicts: dominance, compromise, and integration, as well as alternative dispute resolution and suppression strategies for organisations. Blake and Mouton, as cited in Tabitha and Florence (2019), categorising their strategies based on the level of concern for individuals and production, assert that interpersonal conflicts can be managed through five strategies: forcing, compromising, withdrawing, problem-solving, and smoothing.

Tabitha and Florence (2019) assets a two-dimensional framework of conflict handling strategies based on the assertiveness and cooperativeness of the parties concerned. He acknowledged five conflict management strategies: competing, compromising, collaborating, accommodating, and alternative dispute resolution. As cited by Tabitha and Florence (2019), Rahim posits that interpersonal conflict can be managed through five strategies: dominating, obliging, integrating, compromising, and avoiding, based on the level of the concerned individuals. All the scholars mentioned in this study agreed on using compromise as one of the strategies for conflict management. However, there is a considerable similarity between Thomas and Rahim strategies; no wonder even in contemporary studies, administrators have extensively applied their conflict management strategies (Daly, Lee, Soutar & Rasmi, 2010).

Some essential strategies for organisational conflict management are collaboration, competition, bargaining, alternative dispute resolution, and compromising. A collaboration strategy aims to satisfy the needs of the parties concerned, especially when the members have mutually significant goals. Competition strategy refers to an individual or group's desire to meet their goals and objectives either moderately or to other groups' detriment. In an organisation, individuals and groups compete for scarce resources, position, recognition, power. According to Issa (2009), a very competitive individual's use of power can only be reduced through higher external power, such as legitimate law or social taboos, when going overboard. The bargaining strategy is used primarily on a contractual agreement between management and employees for settlement when it becomes a legal matter (Fajana & Shadare, 2012). It gives all aggrieved parties concerned the chance to have a similar expression of their minds, regardless of the hierarchy of those involved in the dispute, without prejudice.

2.3 Concept of Employee Involvement

Employee involvement is a management initiative concerned with how employees can be best and most appropriately engaged in participating in organisational processes to improve their organisations' success (Heathfield, 2016). Sofijanovna and Zabijakin–Chatleska (2013) define employee involvement as a management initiative that allows employees to participate in decision-making and their empowerment to utilise their abilities to achieve improved

performance for both the employee and his organisation. Employee involvement allows employees to participate and contribute to managerial decision-making and improvement activities appropriate to their levels in the organisation. Employee involvement is concerned with different work design approaches and special activities; only one thing differentiates one company from another: its people (Mambula, Francis, & Zirra, 2021).

2.4 Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study:

H₀₁: Cooperation strategy does not significantly influence employee involvement in the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), Osun State.

H₀₂: Competition strategy does not significantly influence employee involvement in the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), Osun State.

H₀₃: Collective bargaining strategy does not significantly influence employee involvement in the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), Osun State.

H₀₄: Alternative dispute strategy does not significantly influence employee involvement in the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), Osun State.

2.5 Conceptual Model

A conceptual model that shows the interaction between compensation management practice and employee retention was proposed in figure 2.1.

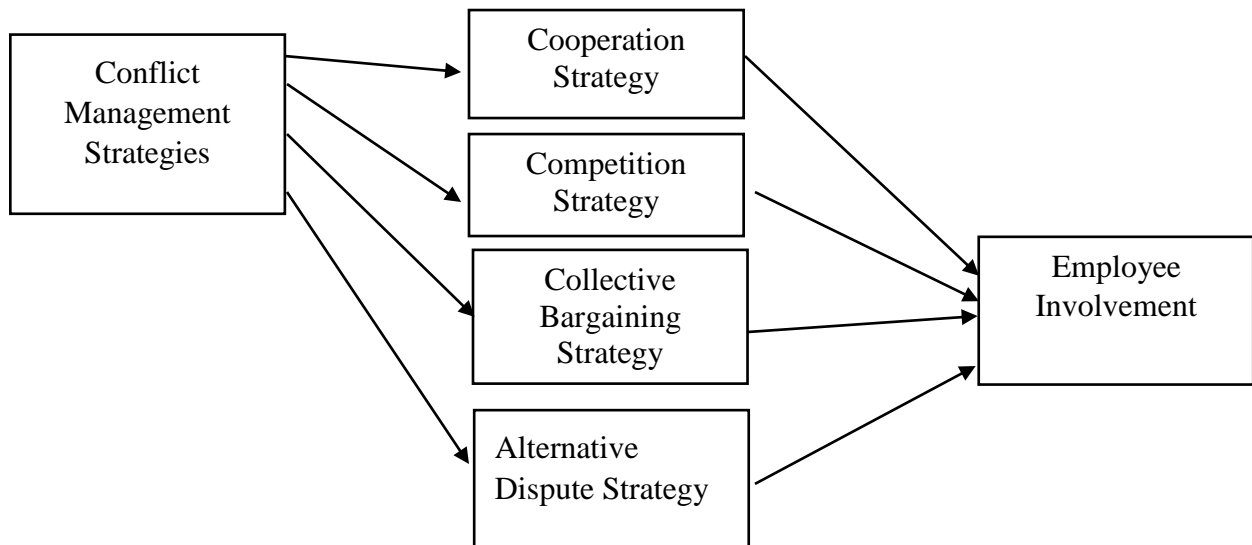


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Model Source: Researchers (2021)

2.6. Empirical Review

The Alabu, Kembo, and Otara (2020) study aimed to determine the principals' conflict management techniques for teacher job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Uriri and Nyatike sub-counties, Kenya. The research employed a descriptive survey design to obtain information. The study found that incorporating obliging had a strong and positive correlation with teacher job satisfaction, whereas dominating and avoiding techniques had p , which was not statistically significant. The findings add to the existing body of knowledge and may help develop guidelines for principals and other stakeholders to manage schools effectively.

A study was conducted by Malak, Sukaina, and Norlena (2020) in Lebanon. The effect of conflict management on employee performance in some industrial firms in Lebanon was investigated. Descriptive statistics were obtained, and research hypotheses were tested using Pearson correlation and regression analysis. The results obtained showed that, in general, conflict management has a positive and significant effect on employees' performance, but to a weak extent. Notably, only collaborative, compromising, and accommodating styles had a weak positive correlation with employee performance.

John-Eke and Akintokunbo (2020) examine conflict management as a tool for increasing employee involvement. Their findings reveal that conflicts do not always put the organisation in a bad light. However, a constructively managed conflict brings about healthy competition, strengthens team participation, and bridges communication. As a result, we recommend that organisations reeducate their employees on conflict management concepts, dispelling the popular but false notion that conflict is bad, destructive, and should be avoided at all costs. Instead, managers should adopt strategies or strategies based on the nature and the type of conflict.

In India, Zahid (2017) conducted a study on the impact of organisational conflict on employee performance in the private commercial banks of Bangladesh. The study examined the antecedents of organisational conflict and the circumstances under which organisational conflict affects employee performance. The study revealed that conflict hinders the performance of employees in an organisation.

In another study, Owan (2018) investigated conflict management strategies and secondary school teachers' job involvement. Six null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The study adopted correlational and factorial research designs. According to the findings, the level of job involvement of teachers in the Obubra Local Government Area is significantly high. The findings also revealed that the four conflict resolution strategies (arbitration, dialogue, effective communication, and smoothing) had a significant combined influence on secondary school teachers' job involvement. It was based on this background that this study was considered pertinent to carry out.

Adeniran and Adeniyi (2018) discussed issues beyond leadership control in managing conflict in the Nigerian university system. To effectively examine conflict management, this study adopts desk research using mainly secondary data from textbooks, the internet, journals. The study uncovers that conflict is prevalent in human life and can not be removed. Instead, its effect can

be reduced to ensure that it does not impede the organisation's activities and reduce employees' job performance.

Longe (2018) reported that empirical tests showed a significantly positive relationship between conflict management strategies (collective bargaining, compromise, and accommodation) and organisational performance. Conversely, non-integrative conflict management strategies (competition, domination, and alternative dispute resolution) had a negative statistically determinate effect on organisational performance. Also, the result of the regression analysis indicated that collective bargaining strategy displayed the highest significant positive correlation with organisational performance. Furthermore, study findings show that conflicts arise in the workplace over various organisational experiences based on economic and goal-incompatible orientations. The union-management conflict has been discovered as the most prevalent type of industrial conflict in an organisation.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The descriptive survey method was adopted because it allows researchers to collect data without manipulating any variables of interest. The survey method also provides respondents with an equal opportunity to participate in the study. The independent variable was conflict management strategies for this study, while the dependent variable was employee involvement.

The target population for the study comprises all employees of the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), Osogbo region, Osun State. The total number of employees in the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), Osogbo region is one-hundred and seventy-four (174). The study used a simple random sampling technique. At the same time, the simple random sampling technique was used to ensure that every member of the population had an equal chance of being included in the study. Therefore, a total of 150 respondents were randomly selected as a sample.

The main instrument that was used for data collection was a set of structured questionnaires. The questionnaire was divided into three sections with a total of 41 questions. Section A consists of Demographic Information. Section B consists of the Conflict Management Strategies Scale developed by Lee & Allen (2002). Finally, section C consists of the Employee Involvement Scale developed by Kanungo (1982). The questions were designed in a Likert format, with Strongly Agree equaling 5, Agree equaling 4, Undecided equaling 3, Disagree equaling 2, and Strongly Disagree equaling 1.

The respondents were assured of the confidentiality of the information to be supplied. However, it took the researchers three weeks to administer and retrieve the distributed measuring scale. One hundred fifty copies of the questionnaire were administered; 140 copies were filled in and were utilised for the study. Regression Analysis was used to test hypotheses. All research hypotheses were analysed and tested at 0.05 alpha levels.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Test of Hypotheses

Table 1: Multiple Regression Analysis

	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
	β	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
R = .712 ^a					
R ² = .507					
Adj. R ² = .501					
F = 12.956*					
(constant)	1.172	.272		4.314	.000
Cooperation	.689	.013	.892	3.515	.004
Alternative Dispute Resolution	.854	.035	.258	2.387	.000
Collective bargaining	.516	.015	.010	1.071	.006
Competition	.240	.042	.011	.954	.378

Dependent variable: Employee Involvement

Source: Calculations based on Researchers' Survey, 2021

Multiple regression was used to test if the conflict management strategies significantly predicted employee involvement. The result of the regression revealed that the model explained 50.7% of the variance and that the model was a significant predictor of employee involvement, $F(2,137) = 12.956$, $p = .05$. However, the coefficient of conflict management strategies shows that cooperation strategy had coefficients ($\beta = .689$, $t = 3.515$, $p = .004 < \alpha = 0.05$, indicating significant influence of cooperation strategy on employee involvement. Alternative Dispute Resolution had coefficients ($\beta = .854$, $t = 2.387$, $p = .000 < \alpha = 0.05$, indicating significant influence of Alternative Dispute Resolution on employee involvement. Collective bargaining had coefficients ($\beta = .516$, $t = 1.071$, $p = .006 < \alpha = 0.05$, indicating the significant influence of collective bargaining on employee involvement. Finally, competition strategy had coefficients ($\beta = .240$, $t = .954$, $p = .378 > \alpha = 0.05$, indicating insignificant influence of competition strategy on employee performance).

Thus, Cooperation Strategy, Alternative dispute resolution, Collective bargaining Strategy have a significant influence on employee involvement, while Competition Strategy has no significant influence on employee involvement. Conflict management strategies significantly influence employee involvement at Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), Osogbo, Osun State.

4.2. Discussion of Findings

All hypotheses stated that competition, cooperation, alternative dispute resolution, and collective bargaining strategies do not significantly influence employee involvement in the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), Osogbo, Osun State. The hypothesis was analysed using Multiple Regression Analysis. They revealed that conflict management strategies (cooperation,

alternative dispute resolution, and collective bargaining strategies) were positively and significantly related to employee involvement. While competition strategy had no significant influence on employee performance, This implies that alternative dispute resolution strategies are more predictive and impact employee involvement.

Arop and Bassey (2017) found that administrators' use of dialogue and dominance had a significant influence on secondary school students' rights to a fair hearing, the dignity of the human person, freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association, except in the recognition and protection of students' rights to freedom of religion. Oshionebo and Ashang (2017) examined organisational strategies to resolve principal teacher conflicts between secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. The finding buttressed Fajana and Shadare (2012) views that in the employment relationship, the interests of employers represented by management and employees represented by the union have often been opposed in work organisations. In Nigeria but developed economies, this has historically been the primary cause of conflict in unionised organisations. The present study results aligned with Comboh (2014) and Mugal and Khan (2013) on conflict management and organisation performance.

This position was reinforced by the previous findings of Mugal and Khan (2013) as re-affirmed by the study hypotheses. Expressly, regression analysis indicated that collective bargaining strategy displayed the highest significant positive correlation with organisational performance. Conversely, non-integrative conflict management strategies (competition, domination, and alternative dispute resolution) showed a negative statistically determinate effect on organisational performance.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the main objectives of this research have been achieved. A positive and significant relationship between conflict management strategies and employee involvement is realisable when alternative dispute resolution strategies are adopted among workers for harmonious coexistence. However, the best strategy for conflict resolution between transmission companies in Nigeria is alternative dispute resolution.

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

1. Because conflict is unavoidable in any organisation, management should not treat it with kid gloves because it can impact employee performance, which can either harm or help the organisation achieve its goals.
2. The organisation should embark on training and retraining its employees in conflict management to create a conducive working environment. In addition, there should be efficient and effective communication between and among all categories of employees in the organisation. As a result, the organisation will be less likely to face contentious situations.

3. Problems of shared resources among the employees by the management should be dealt with before they affect the organisation's performance. Management should formulate policies that will ensure that conflicts that may occur within the organisation are quickly resolved.
4. Mutual survival and continued sustenance of optimum organisational performance are both the goal and the basis for employees and employers in the industrial work setting.

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