

Conflict Management and Conflict Management Skills Needed in Educational Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study adopted Descriptive Research Design with a qualitative style in data collection through knowledge and opinions gathering from various scholars, including personal experiences of the author to describe the variables under investigation tagged “Conflict Management and Conflict Management Skills Needed in Educational Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria”. The study discovered from the various scholars opinions reviewed that conflicts are destructive, constructive and unavoidable of every organization irrespective of its nature, some Nigerian tertiary institutions administrators and managers including employees displayed unnecessary powers leading to conflicts and seems to forget that conflict is always part of human existence with low understanding of the dynamics of conflicts, conflict management and conflict resolution. The study also discovered that some administrators, managers as well as union seems to have low and in some occasions lacked the needed conflict management skills, strategies and styles of managing conflicts. It was also noted there was low conflict prevention strategies and skills. Among other things it was recommended that Nigerian tertiary institutions administrators and managers including unions’ members should learn and know that conflict is understand the dynamics of conflicts, conflict management and conflict resolution. They should as well acquire the needed conflict management skills, strategies, styles and prevention so as to manage their tertiary institutions effectively.

Keywords: *Conflict, Conflict Management, Conflict Management Skills, Strategies Needed, Disputes, Educational Tertiary Institutions, Nigeria*

Introduction

Conflicts are an unavoidable part of organization as long as the goals of the shareholders, managers and other staff members are different from each other, including their personal interests. Conflict is basically a fact which causes disputes within an organization and among organizational employees because they are challenged for some reasons (Kamran, Yumna, & Syed, 2016). Conflict occurs between people in all kinds of human relationships and in all social settings. Because of the wide range of potential differences among people, the absence of conflict usually signals the absence of meaningful interaction. Conflict by itself is neither

good nor bad. However, the manner in which conflict is handled determines whether it is constructive or destructive (Deutsch & Coleman, 2000; Ron, 2000).

Conflict means to be in opposition to one another. It refers to disagreement between people or members of organisations. Such disagreement is inherent in relationships between all human beings. It is also a part of the competition process that is basic to the survival and successful evolution of the species in search for new and better ways to cope with limited resources and stress from environmental change (Digvijaysinh, 2013). According to this definition it is obvious that conflict always exists between people, groups of people, members of an organisation and between organisations which are related in one way or another. See figure 1 below:



Figure 1: Concept of conflict (Study.com, 2019)

Evans (2013) described conflict as a disagreement among groups or individuals characterized by antagonism and hostility. This is usually fueled by the opposition of one party to another, in an attempt to reach an objective different from that of the other party. The elements involved in the conflict have varied sets of principles and values, thus allowing such a conflict to arise.

In general, there are six major sources: (i) the interpersonal disagreements that arise when one person is experiencing individual stress; (ii) the problems resulting from role conflict, a condition that occurs when there is a clash over one's role in the organization; (iii) the power struggles that pit persons and groups against one another to achieve their own selfish objectives; (iv) the misunderstandings and disagreements from differentiation, i.e., the clashes that arise because people approach common problems from different orientations; (v) the interdependence requirements for collaboration which, if not extensive and balanced between the parties, cause communication and interaction breakdowns which, in turn, if critical, lead to more intensive conflicts; and (vi) the external pressures from forces outside the enterprise that breed internal pressures as the system seeks to adapt but not to disrupt its . Organizational conflict is the behaviour intended to obstruct the achievement of some other person's goals. Organisational conflict is therefore, a product of incompatibility of goals and it arises from opposing behaviours. According to Lewis, French and Steane (1997), conflict within an organisation is inevitable. This is a consequence of boundaries arising within any organisational structure, creating separate groups that need to compete for scarce resources

Justification of the Study

Many authors like Kamran, Yumna, and Syed, 2016; Deutsch and Coleman, 2000; Ron, 2000; Digvijaysinh, 2013; Evans 2013; and Omisore and Abiodun 2014; including others have written about conflict and conflict management but issues like conflict management, types of conflict, conflict model process in Nigerian tertiary institutions were not addressed. This study

covered heart - troubling questions like types of views and thoughts about conflicts, sources of conflicts and the likely causes of conflicts in our tertiary institutions. This study is greatly justified with its uniqueness because it will reveal the effects and benefits of conflicts if properly managed in our tertiary institutions. It has also specified methods of future conflicts prevention, strategies and styles including skills needed by our administrators and managers in managing conflicts and the reasons conflicts may arise in our tertiary institutions in Nigeria with great implication.

Reviewed Related Literatures

Conceptual Framework/ Conflict Theory

C. Wright Mills has been called the founder of modern conflict theory. In Mill's view, social structures are created through conflict between people with differing interests and resources. Individuals and resources, in turn are influenced by these structures and by the "unequal distribution of power and resources in the society" (Omisore & Abiodun 2014).

The power elites of the American society, (i.e., the military – industrial complex) "emerged from the fusion of cooperate elite, the pentagon and the executive branch of government". Mills argued that the interests of these elites were opposed to those of the people. He further theorized that, the policies of the power elites would result in "increased escalation of conflict of weapons of mass destruction, and possibly the annihilation of human race" (Omisore et al, 2014).

A recent articulation of the conflict theory is found in Alan Sears (Canadian Sociologist) book: "A Guide to Theoretical Thinking" (2008). Sears postulated that:

Societies are defined by inequality that produces conflict, rather than order and consensus. This conflict based on inequality can only be overcome through a fundamental transformation of the existing relations in the society and is productive of new social relations.

1. The disadvantaged have structural interests that run counter to the status quo, which, once they are assumed, will lead to social change. Thus, they are viewed as agents of change rather than objects one should feel sympathy for.
2. Human potential (e.g., capacity for creativity) is suppressed by conditions of exploitation and oppression, which are necessary in any society with an equal division of labour. These and other qualities do not necessarily have to be stunted due to requirements of the so called "civilizing process" or "functional necessity". Creativity is actually an engine for economic development and change.
3. The role of theory is in realizing human potential and transforming society, rather than maintaining the power structure. The opposite aim of theory would be objectivity and detachment associated with positivism, where theory is a neutral, explanatory tool. This is to say that conflicts are inevitable as long there social groups with inequality.

Concept of Conflict Management

The most popular conceptualization of conflict management styles is collaborating, accommodating,

competing, compromising, and avoiding. Individuals who use collaborating style manage conflicts in a direct and cooperative manner and aim to reach a solution collaboratively with the other parties (El- Rahman, Hosny & Ata, 2018). However, those who use accommodating style face conflicts in a passive and accommodating way and follow the decisions of other parties. On the other hand, individuals with a competing style endeavor to force behaviors on others and have much more concern for self than others. Also, individuals who use avoiding style have a tendency to sidestep conflicts whereas those who use compromising style aim to reach mutually

agreed decisions between parties (Hamouda, Tah & Hashish, 2012). In fact, these five individual's conflict modes are assessed along with two principle dimensions: Assertiveness and Cooperativeness. Assertiveness attributes the quality in which person attempts to settle his or her own concerns, whereas cooperativeness addresses to some extend person is concerned to satisfy others' wishes (Labraguea & Petittebe, 2017).

Conflict management is the principle that all conflicts cannot necessarily be resolved, but learning how to manage conflicts can decrease the odds of non-productive escalation. Conflict management involves acquiring skills related to conflict resolution, self-awareness about conflict modes, conflict communication skills, and establishing a structure for management of conflict in your environment.

All members of every organisation need to have ways of keeping conflict to a minimum and of solving problems caused by conflict, before conflict becomes a major obstacle to your work (Mckinney, 2019). Conflict management is the practice of being able to identify and handle conflicts sensibly, fairly, and efficiently. Since conflicts in a business are a natural part of the workplace, it is important that there are people who understand conflicts and know how to resolve them. This is important in today's market more than ever. Everyone is striving to show how valuable they are to the company they work for and at times, this can lead to disputes with other members of the team. Anderson (1990) maintained that conflict management has a wide application. Conflict resolution refers to dealing with or removing the cause of the conflict. All organizations, be it simple or complex, possess a range of mechanisms or procedures for managing conflict. The success or effectiveness of such procedures can be gauged by the extent to which they limit conflict behaviour and the extent to which they help to achieve a satisfactory solution. Figure 2 below show a conflict management model.

Conflicting Resolution Model

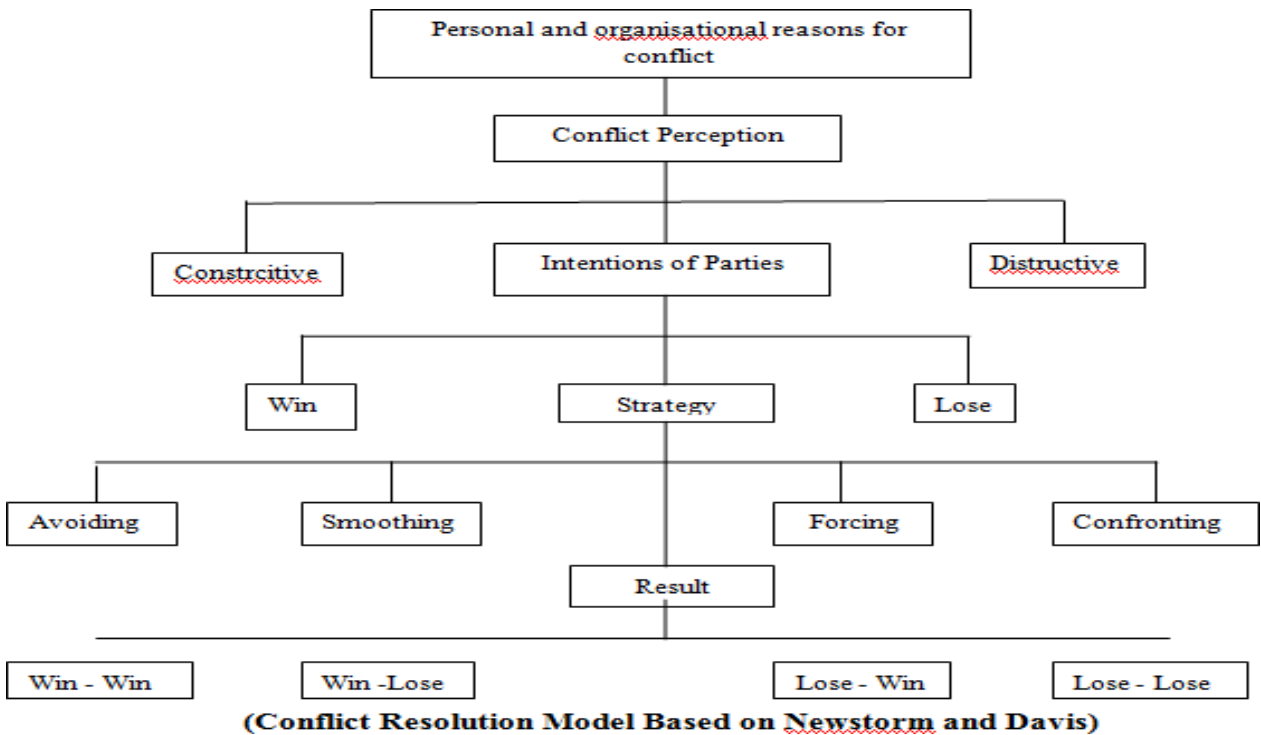


Figure 2: Conflict Resolution Model Based on Newstorm and Davis (Digvijaysinh, 2013)

Types of Conflicts in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

Conflict in Nigeria tertiary institutions may be classified and formed into the following seven types (Evans, 2013):

i. Interpersonal Conflict

This refers to a conflict between two individuals. This occurs typically due to how people are different from one another. We have varied personalities which usually results to incompatible choices and opinions. Apparently, it is a natural occurrence which can eventually help in personal growth or developing your relationships with others. In addition, coming up with adjustments is necessary for managing this type of conflict. However, when interpersonal conflict gets too destructive, calling in a mediator would help so as to have it resolved.

ii. Intrapersonal Conflict

This occurs within an individual. The experience takes place in the person's mind. Hence, it is a type of conflict that is psychological involving the individual's thoughts, values, principles and emotions. Intrapersonal conflict may come in different scales, from the simpler mundane ones like deciding whether or not to go organic for lunch to ones that can affect major decisions such as choosing a career path. Furthermore, this type of conflict can be quite difficult to handle if you find it hard to decipher your inner struggles. It leads to restlessness and uneasiness, or can even cause depression. In such occasions, it would be best to seek a way to let go of the anxiety through communicating with other people. Eventually, when you find yourself out of the situation, you can become more empowered as a person. Thus, the experience evoked a positive change which will help you in your own personal growth.

iii. Intragroup Conflict

Is a type of conflict that happens among individuals within a team. The incompatibilities and misunderstandings among these individuals lead to an intragroup conflict. It arises from interpersonal disagreements (e.g. team members have different personalities which may lead to tension) or differences in views and ideas (e.g. in a presentation, members of the team might find the notions presented by the one presiding to be erroneous due to their differences in opinion). Within a team, conflict can be helpful in coming up with decisions which will eventually allow them to reach their objectives as a team. However, if the degree of conflict disrupts harmony among the members, then some serious guidance from a different party will be needed for it to be settled.

iv. Intergroup Conflict

Takes place when a misunderstanding arises among different teams within an organization. For instance, the sales department of an organization can come in conflict with the customer support department. This is due to the varied sets of goals and interests of these different groups. In addition, competition also contributes for intergroup conflict to arise.

There are other factors which fuel this type of conflict. Some of these factors may include a rivalry in resources or the boundaries set by a group to others which establishes their own identity as a team. Conflict may seem to be a problem to some, but this is not how conflict should be perceived. On the other hand, it is an opportunity for growth and can be an effective means of opening up among groups or individuals. However, when conflict begins to draws back productivity and gives way to more conflicts, then conflict management would be needed to come up with a resolution.

v. Interorganisational Conflict

Conflict that occurs between two or more organisation is called interorganisational conflict. Competition can heighten interorganisational conflict. Corporate takeover, mergers and acquisition can also produce interorganisational conflict. Organisational conflict involves interpersonal conflicts with colleagues or supervisors, or intergroup conflicts within different

sections of an organization. There are two essential types of conflict in organizations: vertical and horizontal.

Vertical conflict occurs in groups of different hierarchical levels, such as supervisors and salesmen, whereas horizontal conflict occurs between individuals of the same level, such as managers in the same organization. In the vertical conflict, differences in status and power between groups are in general larger than in the horizontal conflict because these aspects tend to equalize in equivalent hierarchical levels (Digvijaysinh, 2013). When vertical conflict takes place between operational workers and administration, their sources refer to: (i) psychological distance: workers don't feel involved in the organization and feel that their needs are not met; (ii) power and status: workers feel powerless and alienated; (iii) differences in value and ideology: this difference represents underlying beliefs on objectives and goals of an organization and; (iv) scarce resources: disagreements regarding benefits, salary and work conditions. In vertical conflict, apparently individuals in lower organizational level seek to avoid conflicts with higher hierarchical levels

vi. Multi-Party Conflict

Occurs in societies when different interest groups and organizations have varying priorities over resource management and policy development. These complex conflicts typically involve a combination of economic, value and power sources. This complexity is often beyond the reach of traditional authoritative or adversarial procedures, and more collaborative approaches to building consensus are required for resolution.

vii. International Conflict

Occurs between states at the global level. Competition for resources certainly plays a part, but value and power conflict are often intertwined and sometimes predominate. The differences are articulated through the channels of diplomacy in a constant game of give and take, or threat and counter threat, sometimes for the highest of stakes (Ron, 2000).

More Forms/Classification Of Conflict

Different scholars have tried to classify conflict into various forms. The first classification is the relationship, task and process conflict. There is, however, considerable conceptual overlap between these different forms of conflict (Dirks & Parks, 2003).

1. Relationship Conflict

This exists when there are interpersonal incompatibilities among group members, including personality clashes, tension, animosity and annoyance. This type of conflict produces negative individual emotions, such as anxiety, mistrust, or resentment (Jehn, 1995), frustration, tension and fear of being rejected by other team members.

2. Task Conflicts

These are disagreements about the content of a task and work goals, such as distribution of resources, procedures, and interpretation of facts (Joan, 2010). Task conflicts include differences in view points, ideas and opinions, and may coincide with animated discussions and personal excitement. In contrast to relationship conflict, findings concerning task conflict are not as conclusive. Task conflict has been associated with several beneficial effects such as improving the use of debate within a team which results in quality ideas and innovation. In addition, studies have shown that task conflict can also be associated with several harmful effects, such as job dissatisfaction, lack of team work and increased anxiety (Jehn & Mannix, 2001).

3. Process Conflicts

This refers to disagreement about how a task should be accomplished, individuals' responsibilities and delegation (Jehn & Mannix, 2001), e.g. when group members disagree

about whose responsibility it is to complete a specific duty. Process conflict has been associated with lower morale, decreased productivity and poor team performance. Another form of classification or levels of conflict is as follows:

- i. Interpersonal conflict;
- ii. interpersonal conflict /intra group conflict;
- iii. inter group/Inter departmental conflict and
- iv. inter organizational conflict.

Below is Conflict Model Process Needed in Nigeria Tertiary

Stage I: Potential opposition or incompatibility

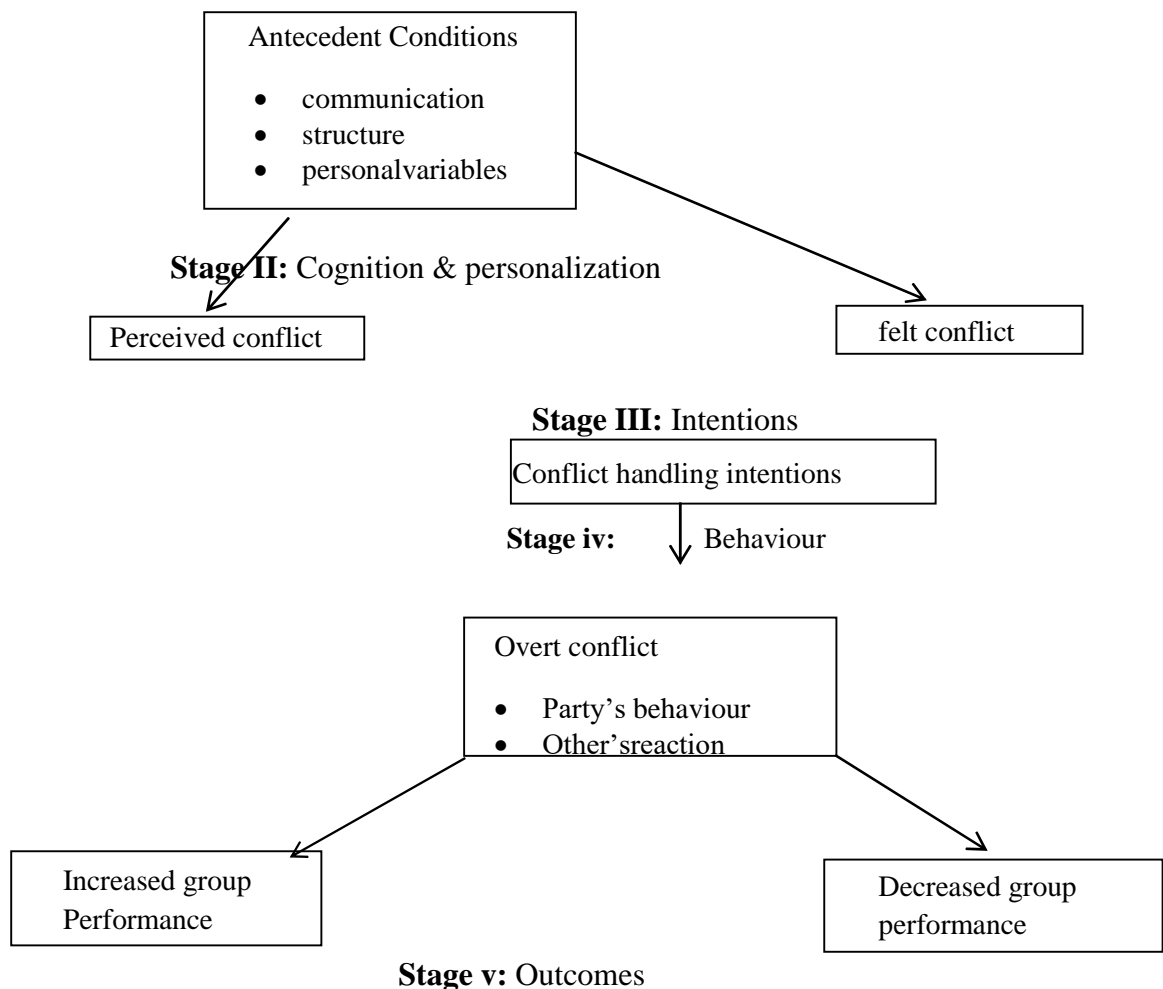


Figure 3: The Conflict Model Process (Robbins, 2005).

It is important to differentiate between sources and causes of organisational conflict. While the former explains the place or nature with which or from which conflict emanates; (it explains the reason why conflict is endemic and inevitable), the latter explains these conditions that may warrant conflict to spring up and become an issue of concern.

This is because conflict at its source may not necessarily become an issue of controversy, confrontation and concern of all but conflict which is caused (either intentionally or not) will no doubt bring about controversies and confrontations which may not necessarily surface in

conflict at its source (Omisore & Abiodun, 2014).

Types of Views about Conflict

So far, it is quite evident that to say that conflict is all good or bad is inappropriate and naïve. Whether a conflict is good or bad it depends on the type of conflict and how it managed. Specifically, it is necessary to differentiate between functional and dysfunctional conflict (Omisore & Abiodun, 2014).

1. Functional or Constructive Conflict View

The interactionist view does not propose that all conflicts are good. Rather, some conflicts support the goals of the group and improve its performance; these are functional, constructive forms of conflict. Robbin (2005) defines functional conflict as the conflict that supports the goals of the group and improves its (group's) performance. The argument is that, if conflict leads to normal competition among groups and the groups work harder and produce more, it is advantageous to the group and the institution. It is viewed as a confrontation between two ideas, goals and parties that improves employees and organizational performance. One of the main benefits of constructive conflict is that it gives its members a chance to identify the problems and see the opportunities. Also, it can inspire to new ideas, learning, and growth among individuals (Kinicki & Kreitner, 2008).

2. Dysfunctional/Destructive Conflict View

There are conflicts that hinder group performance; these are dysfunctional or destructive forms of conflict. Conflict is inevitable and desirable in organizations, but when not effectively handled, conflict can tear relationships apart and, thus, interfere with the exchange of ideas, information and resources in groups and between departments. Dysfunctional conflict hinders and prevents organizational goals from being achieved. Dysfunctional conflict usually hinders organizational performance and leads to decreased productivity. This conflict orientation is characterized by competing individual interests and overriding the overall interest of the business. Managers withhold information from one another. Employees sabotage others' work, either intentionally or through subtle, conflict- motivated disinterest in team work (Kinicki & Kreitner, 2008).

Sources of Conflict in Nigeria Tertiary Institutions

Omisore and Abiodun (2014) identified two sources of conflict in Nigerian tertiary institutions and they include:

1. Internal Sources

This is so called because they refer to factors which are inherent within the framework of an organization. (Omisore & Abiodun, 2014) states that the major factor of internal sources of conflict is the "opposing interests" of industrial actors. These "divergent interests" will bring about conflict in an attempt by the two parties in organizations to try to share what Ajibade (2004) calls "industrial cake". Apart from the above, it is another statement of fact that there is usually "power relationship" between the two actors in an industry which no doubt produce conflict and make such inevitable.

2. The External Sources

These are so called because they are outside the four walls of the organization. It may occur when a third party intervention to industrial dispute becomes one sided or biased. A good example is where government as the third and regulatory party tries to formulate policy or enact laws that favour one party at the detriment of the other (Omisore & Abiodun, 2014)..

Causes of Conflict in Nigeria Tertiary Institutions

Community Door (2019) stated and explained the below as causes of conflicts in Nigerian tertiary institutions:

1. Misunderstandings

Conflict can arise from misunderstandings about.

- i. The nature, aims and objectives of a job
- ii. Differing expectations about how things should be done
- iii. Work conditions and wages
- iv. The different responsibilities of management and employees
- v. Differences in values, beliefs, needs, or priorities

2. Poor communication

Communication relies on clear and complete messages being sent as well as being received. Problems can be reduced by paying attention to how well you send messages and how well you receive them.

Both managers and workers are responsible for ensuring that these issues are considered. There are many ways to improve information flow and communication. Here are some suggestions:

- i. Keep message books/day books
- ii. Keep policy books which include all policies as decided at meetings
- iii. Hold regular staff/management meetings for passing on information
- iv. Have frequent employee meetings
- v. Ensure correspondence is available for everyone to see
- vi. Distribute minutes of all meetings promptly and widely
- vii. Ensure there is clarity about what the objectives are and about what decisions have been made
- viii. Ensure decisions are implemented
- ix. Give everyone time to talk at meetings
- x. Try to spend twice as much time listening as you spend talking.

Unclear communication from staff to clients is another common source of conflict. It is vital that "house rules" are written down for clients, and that there are no variations in the interpretation of those rules. Distressed clients can very quickly become confused and angry if they feel that they are not being listened to - especially by those who say they care.

3. Lack of planning

Lack of planning often means an organisation moves from one crisis to the next. This sense of disorganisation and lack of direction can be stressful and can create many problems including misunderstandings. The time spent in planning will be recouped many times over in the more efficient use of workers' time, and in real and long-term benefits to clients.

4. Poor staff selection

Inappropriate selection of staff can result in ill-feeling and conflict. Feelings of ill-will may be increased by dismissing staff members. While staff conflict problems can never be entirely avoided, they can be minimised with good staff selection procedures. Considering existing staff views when approaching staff selection will help minimise conflicts in the workplace

5. Frustration, stress and burnout

When people become frustrated or stressed they are more irritable and more likely to create conflicts than at other times. It is important to recognise the signs of stress in people's work situations in order to prevent burnout. Try to help people identify the causes of work related stress, and take steps to change these factors or, better still, try to anticipate possible causes of stress before they arise. These factors could include

- i. Threats of violence or actual violence
- ii. Overcrowding or lack of privacy
- iii. Verbal abuse

- iv. Dirty or untidy work space
 - v. Noise
 - vi. Harassment
 - vii. Continual crises
 - viii. Lack of ability to influence the working environment
 - ix. Tension between staff members
 - x. Lack of direction from management
- 6. Seeking Power:** often a conflict for power struggle takes place when everyone wants to be a leader and nobody wants to be a follower.
- 7. Weak Leadership:** conflict is bound to result if someone of less stature leads a more qualified and experienced worker. Arbitrary interpretation and application of rules and policies: Lack of transparency and openness creates dissatisfaction among the affected people.

Effect of Conflict on Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

Conflict may occur between two individuals, as in the case of superior versus subordinate, between heads of department, etc. Groups may be drawn into conflict with each other on the basis of performance, importance to particular groups and, in general, union management rivalries. Conflict can also occur within an individual as in situations of dilemma of choice, vividly characterized by phrases such as “between the devil and the deep blue sea” or caught on the horns of dilemma. For example, a personnel manager may be quite undecided about how to deal with a conflict (with workers, union) that is likely to result in work stoppage and loss of productivity. The general assumption is that conflict tends to have negative consequences for both the individual and the organization. Below is a summarized list of the effect of conflicts on individual and organizations (Omisoreet al, 2014):

1. Psychological Responses

- Inattentiveness to other things.
- Lack of interest in work
- Job dissatisfaction
- Work anxiety
- Estrangement or alienation from others
- Frustration

2. Behavioural Responses

- Excessive smoking
- Alcoholism
- Under eating or overeating
- Aggression towards others or work sabotage
- Decreased communication
- Resisting influence attempts.

3. Physiological Responses

These are often ignored or unnoticed: more and more adrenalin is shot into the blood which increases the heart beat and blood pressure while more hydrochloric acid is secreted into the stomach, leading to:

- Peptic ulcers
- Respiratory problems such as asthma
- Hypertension
- Headaches

- Coronary problems.

Hence, it may be understood that conflict does not only affects an individual's performance, but also gives rise to psychosomatic disturbances, which undermine the health of the individual. The progress so far made in our civilisation is due to conflict between nature and man. Conflict releases energy at every level of human activity, energy that can produce positive, constructive results. Conflicts tend to have motivational values use in solving the problem. To resolve a conflict, one might explore different avenues or alternatives of action, which make him/her more knowledgeable.

Benefits of Conflict

Despite the effect of conflict, there are benefits of conflict which include the following:

- Motivates individuals to do better and work harder. One's talents and abilities come to the forefront in a conflict situation.
- Satisfies certain psychological needs like dominance, aggression, esteem and ego, and thereby provides an opportunity for constructive use and release of aggressive urges.
- Provides creative and innovative ideas. For example, employee benefits of the present day are an outcome of the union-management conflict over the past decades.
- Add variety to one's organisational life, otherwise work life would be dull and boring.
- Facilitates an understanding of the problems, people have with one another and leads to better coordination among individuals and departments, in addition to strengthening intra-group relationship.

Other Positive Effects Include:-

i. Inspire creativity

Fortunately, some organizations view conflict as an opportunity for finding creative solutions to problems. Conflict can inspire members to brainstorm, while examining problems from various perspectives.

ii. Share and Respect Opinions

As organization members work together to solve conflict, they are more willing to share their opinions with other members of the group. Conflict can also cause members to actively listen to each other as they work to accomplish the organizational goals.

iii. Improve future communication

Conflict can bring group members together and help them learn more about each other. From learning each other's opinion on topics relevant to the organization's growth to understanding each member's preferred communication styles, conflict within an organization can give members the tools necessary to easily solve conflicts in the future.

The Dysfunctional (Negative) Effects Are:

Conflicts affect individual and organizational performance. Resolving conflicts takes a toll on managerial time and energy which could be more productively spent.

- In a conflict situation, people may promote their self-interests or personal gains at the cost of others or the organization.
- Intense conflicts over a prolonged period affect individuals emotionally and physically, and give rise to psychosomatic disorders.
- Time spent on conflicts with cost could have been spent doing more productive things.
- Conflict may lead to work sabotage, employee morale problems, and decline in the market share of product/service and consequent loss of productivity

Conflict Resolution

There is a difference between resolving a conflict and managing conflict. Resolving a conflict ending the dispute by satisfying the interests of both parties. Managing a conflict contains specialized interaction that prevents a dispute from becoming a battle. Managing a conflict attends to personal issues so as to allow for a constructive relationship even though the objective of the issues may not be resolvable. Conflict resolution requires great managerial skills. Our goal in conflict resolution always should be to seek a resolution based on mutual gain. Realistically, resolution is not always possible.

When this is the case, we must manage the conflict to ensure that the relationship is constructive and that open communication is maintained. Successful conflict resolution depends on the ability to regulate stress and emotions. During conflict, strong emotions appear which can hurt feelings. When conflict is handled in an unhealthy way it can be the cause of irreparable rifts, resentments, and break-ups. When a person deals with a conflict in a healthy way, it increases the understanding among people, builds trust and strengthens relationships

How to prevent future conflict in Nigeria Tertiary Institutions

Managers should develop diverse but appropriate strategies to resolve and manage conflicts as they arise before escalating to unmanageable level. The following strategies could assist:

- Establish formal procedures for dispute resolution, grievances and disciplinary issues
- Explain plans to link individual performance targets to the overall business plans so everyone feels involved.
- Listen to consultation is the key to involving employees in decision-making
- Reward fairly to pay is seldom far from people's minds
- Work safely to think about use of computers, smoking, stress and drugs as well as noise, dust and chemicals.
- Value employees of how most employees describe the culture within the organisation?
- Encourage initiative by thinking about job design and developing individuals
- Balance personal and business needs for flexible working patterns help to improve the work-life balance of employees and the effectiveness of the business.
- Develop new skills worthy of investing in People (IIP) to promote training and communication.
- Build trust between employee representatives and management that add value to the organisation by working effectively to respond to change.
- Efforts should be made by the managers to occasionally stimulate conflict by encouraging divergent views and rewarding staff and unit/department for outstanding performance.
- Proper communication procedures should be put in place to resolve conflict. For instance, when any disagreements arise among the employees, it should be reported to the management and then management should get statements from the parties involved, brainstorm the issue and make recommendation on how to resolve the conflict.
- Efforts should be made by the management to organize seminars/workshops on organizational conflict management from time to time for the employees. This will enable employees learn about conflict and how it can be effectively managed for individual and organization effectiveness.
- Lastly, group interaction and activities should be followed up so as to ensure a degree of functionality compatible to conflicts. Positive conflicts will only be possible if particularities of the organization are analyzed.

Strategies of Conflict Management Needed in Nigeria Tertiary Institutions

Conflict management is the practice of being able to identify and handle conflicts sensibly, fairly, and efficiently. Since conflicts in a business are a natural part of the workplace, it is important that there are people who understand conflicts and know how to resolve them. This is important in today's market more than ever. Everyone is striving to show how valuable they are to the company they work for and at times, this can lead to disputes with other members of the team (Mckinney, 2019). Conflict may arise primarily in our tertiary institutions due to the following three reasons (Evans, 2013):

1. Economic conflict

This is brought about by a limited amount of resources. The groups or individuals involved then comes into conflict to attain the most of these resources, thus bringing forth hostile behaviors among those involved.

2. Value conflict

This is concerned with the varied preferences and ideologies that people have as their principles. Conflicts driven by this factor are demonstrated in wars wherein separate parties have sets of beliefs that they assert (in an aggressive manner at that).

3. Power Conflict

This occurs when the parties involved intends to maximize what influence it has in the social setting. Such a situation can happen among individuals, groups or even nations. In other types of conflict, power is also evident as it involves an asserting of influence to another. Conflict comes naturally; the clashing of thoughts and ideas is a part of the human experience. It is true that it can be destructive if left uncontrolled. However, it shouldn't be seen as something that can only cause negative things to transpire. It is a way to come up with more meaningful realizations that can certainly be helpful to the individuals involved. These positive outcomes can be reached through an effective implementation of conflict resolution. Conflict can be seen as an opportunity for learning and understanding our differences. We can all live harmoniously despite conflicts as long as we know how to responsibly manage these struggles.

Conflict Management Styles Needed in our Tertiary Institutions

Conflicts happen but how an employee and management respond and resolve conflict will limit or enable that employee's and management success. Here are five conflict styles that a managers and administrators will follow according to (Study.com, 2019)

1. Accommodating Style

An accommodating manager is one who cooperates to a high degree. This may be at the manager's own expense and actually work against that manager's own goals, objectives, and desired outcomes. This approach is effective when the other person is the expert or has a better solution.

2. Avoiding Style

Avoiding an issue is one way a manager might attempt to resolve conflict. This type of conflict style does not help the other staff members reach their goals and does not help the manager who is avoiding the issue and cannot assertively pursue his or her own goals. However, this works well when the issue is trivial or when the manager has no chance of winning.

3. Collaborating Strategy

Collaborating managers become partners or pair up with each other to achieve both of their goals in this style. This is how managers break free of the win-lose paradigm and seek the win-win. This can be effective for complex scenarios where managers need to find a novel solution.

4. Competing Strategy

This is the win-lose approach. A manager is acting in a very assertive way to achieve his or her own goals without seeking to cooperate with other employees, and it may be at the expense of

those other employees. This approach may be appropriate for emergencies when time is of the essence.

5. Compromising Method

This is the lose-lose scenario where neither person nor manager really achieves what they want. This requires a moderate level of assertiveness and cooperation. It may be appropriate for scenarios where you need a temporary solution or where both sides have equally important goals.

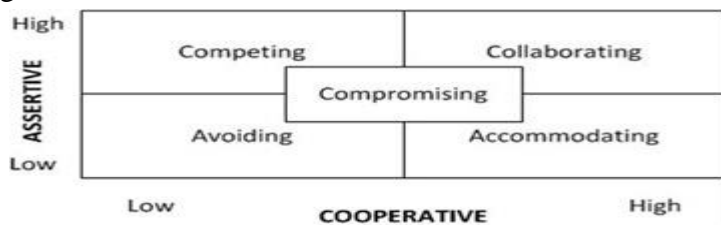


Figure 4: Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (Study.com, 2019)

Types of Conflict Management Skills Needed in our Tertiary Institutions

1. Communication

Much unnecessary conflict can be avoided simply with clear, accurate written and verbal communication; a single lost email could lead to failed plans and fingers pointed. Assumptions about what other people already know, think, or intend can cause resentment or worse.

Many people argue purely because they want to feel heard. Simply being a good listener can be enough to inspire trust and resolve hurt feelings. Examples of good communication skills include (Doyle, 2019)

- i. Quickly Addressing Problems
- ii. Understanding Reluctant Participants
- iii. Formalizing Agreements
- iv. Active Listening
- v. Leadership
- vi. Mediating
- vii. Meeting with Parties
- viii. Modeling Reasonable Dialogue
- ix. Negotiating
- x. Nonverbal Communication
- xi. Open Dialogue
- xii. Suppressing Conflict-Provoking Behaviors
- xiii. Teaching Positive Behaviors
- xiv. Written Communication

2. Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand one's own feelings and those of others, and to handle those feelings well. People who have high emotional intelligence are good at identifying and meeting the needs of others while taking responsibility for their own needs and feelings. A few ways they do this are:

- i. Being Adaptable
- ii. Being Analytical
- iii. Asserting Feelings

- iv. Compromising
- v. Showing Curiosity
- vi. Forgiving Transgressions
- vii. Helping Others
- viii. Identifying Triggers
- ix. Recognizing Improvements
- x. Setting Ground Rules
- xi. Showing Respect
- xii. Modifying Behavior
- xiii. Being Motivated
- xiv. Being Optimistic

3. Empathy

Empathy means feeling what others feel. The ability to see a situation from someone else's viewpoint, and to understand their needs, motivations, and possible misunderstandings, is critical to effective conflict management. Some people are naturally more empathetic than others, but empathy can be developed. At its most useful, empathy is augmented by an intellectual understanding of another's situation, since emotional empathy alone can sometimes create complicated scenarios. Empathy is best applied in a work environment when paired with critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and other types of discernment. Hallmarks of empathy include:

- i. Accountability
- ii. Asking for Feedback
- iii. Building Trust
- iv. Showing Compassion
- v. Embracing Diversity and Inclusion
- vi. Giving Constructive Feedback
- vii. Handling Difficult People
- viii. Managing Emotions
- ix. High Emotional Intelligence
- x. Identifying Nonverbal Cues
- xi. Recognizing Differences
- xii. Understanding Different Viewpoints
- xiii. Good Interpersonal Skills
- xiv. Ability to Recognize Problems
- xv. Good Self-Control
- xvi. Ability to Embrace Different Opinions

4. Creative Problem Solving

Understanding and communication are all very well and good, but do not help much if you don't have a solution for the underlying problem, whatever that problem may be.

Conflict often happens because no one can come up with a workable solution, so resolving the conflict depends on creating a solution. That makes problem-solving an in-demand skill for employers. Examples of problem-solving conflicts in the workplace include:

- i. Conflict Analysis
- ii. Brainstorming Solutions
- iii. Collaborating
- iv. Verbal Communication
- v. Convening Meetings

- vi. Creativity
- vii. Decision Making
- viii. Designating Sanctions
- ix. Nonverbal Communication
- x. Problem Solving
- xi. Sense of Humor
- xii. Goal Integration
- xiii. Monitoring Compliance

Characteristics of Conflict

1. Conflict is a Process

Conflict occurs in 'layers'. First layer is always misunderstanding. The other layers are differences of values, differences of viewpoint, differences of interest, and interpersonal differences. It is also called a process because it begins with one party perceiving the other to oppose or negatively affect its interests and ends with competing, collaborating, compromising or avoiding (Chand, 2019).

2. Conflict is Inevitable

Conflict exists everywhere. No two persons are the same. Hence they may have individual differences. And the differences may be because of values or otherwise, lead to conflict. Although inevitable, conflict can be minimized, diverted and/or resolved. Conflict develops because we are dealing with people's lives, jobs, children, pride, self-concept, ego and sense of mission. Conflict is inevitable and often good, for example, good teams always go through a "form, storm, norm and perform" period.

3. Conflict is a Normal Part of Life

Individuals, groups, and organisations have unlimited needs and different values but limited resources. Thus, this incompatibility is bound to lead to conflicts. The conflict is not a problem, but if it is poorly managed then it becomes a problem.

4. Perception

It must be perceived by the parties to it, otherwise it does not exist. In interpersonal interaction, perception is more important than reality. What we perceive and think affects our behaviour, attitudes, and communication.

5. Opposition

One party to the conflict must be perceiving or doing something the other party does not like or want.

6. Interdependence and Interaction:

There must be some kind of real or perceived interdependence. Without interdependence there can be no interaction. Conflict occurs only when some kind of interaction takes place.

7. Everyone is inflicted with Conflict

Conflict may occur within an individual, between two or more individuals, groups or between organisations.

Views of Different Schools of Thoughts about Conflict

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:

1. Traditional View (1930-1940)

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 in order 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.

2. The Human Relations or Contemporary View (1940-1970)

Conflict is a natural occurrence in all groups. The human relations school accepts conflict. It believes that conflict may benefit a group's performance. 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 needs not necessarily be viewed negatively, but rather positively as a potential force in contributing to the performance of individuals.

3. 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 in an effort to improve individual productivity or introduce innovative systems. Conflict is necessary to perform effectively, but not all conflicts are good. This school of thought has identified several types of conflict:

- Relationship conflict, which focuses on interpersonal relationships; and
- Process conflict, which relates to how the work gets done (Robbins, 2005).

The interactionist interpret conflict in a totally different way from traditionalists and people with a contemporary view. 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). Conflict comes different ways in accordance with degree of seriousness and capacity. At times, it may improve even a difficult situation, (Digvijaysinh, 2013). Darling and Walker (2001) link this idea to the organisation and stated that even when conflict is a natural phenomenon in social relations; it can nevertheless be managed within companies.

Findings of the Study

From the reviewed literatures, it was discovered that conflicts are destructive, constructive and unavoidable of every organization irrespective of the nature because of the goals of the shareholders, managers and other staff members are different from each other, including their personal interests. It was discovered that some Nigerian tertiary institutions administrators and managers including employees displayed unnecessary powers and seems to forget that conflict is always part of human existence with low understanding of the dynamics of conflicts, conflict management and conflict resolution.

The study also discovered that some Nigerian tertiary institutions administrators, managers as well as the employees` union seems to have low and in some in various occasions lacked the needed conflict management skills, strategies and styles of managing conflicts. It was also noted some of the Nigerian tertiary institutions administrators, managers employees as well as union seems to have low conflict management prevention skills and lack understanding the basic reasons conflict may arise in their institutions so as to nib it on or in the board. These views stated are in agreement with (Kamran, Yumna, & Syed, 2016), (Deutsch & Coleman,

2000; Ron, 2000), (Study.com, 2019), (Omisore & Abiodun 2014), (El- Rahman, Hosny & Ata, 2018), (Hamouda, Taha, & Hashish, 2012), (Labraguea & Petitebe, 2017), (Digvijaysinh, 2013), (Dirks and Parks, 2003), (Robbins, 2005), (Omisore & Abiodun, 2014), (Evans, 2013), and (Doyle, 2019), (Chand, 2019).

Implication of the Study

From the finding of this study, it implies that that conflicts may be destructive, constructive and are unavoidable in every organization irrespective of the nature because of the goals of the shareholders, managers and other staff members are different from each other, including their personal interests. It implies that some Nigerian tertiary institutions administrators and managers including employees occasionally displayed unnecessary powers and seems to forget that conflict is always part of human existence with low understanding of the dynamics of conflicts, conflict management and conflict resolution strategies leading to unresolved issues among them. It also implies that some of tertiary institutions administrators, managers as well as the employees` union seems to have low and in some in various occasions lacked the needed conflict management skills, strategies and styles of managing conflicts. These are evidence in some internal disputes clogging the wheel of academic success. It further implies that some Nigerian tertiary institutions administrators, managers as well as unions seems to have low conflict management prevention skills and lack understanding the basic reasons conflict may arise in their institutions so as to nib it on or in the board, these are seen in case where management and union will be running round on how to settle their disputes instead of preventing it.

Recommendations

1. Nigerian tertiary institutions administrators and managers including employees should know that conflict is part of human existence as well as understand the dynamics of conflicts, conflict management and conflict resolution
2. Nigerian tertiary institutions administrators and managers' as well as the employees should acquire the needed conflict management skills, strategies and styles of managing conflict in the tertiary institutions through workshops and conferences.
3. Nigerian tertiary institutions administrators and managers employees as well as unions should acquire the needed conflicts prevention skills and understand the basic reasons conflict may arise in their institutions so as to nib it on or in the board
4. There is need for regular training and retraining of Nigerian tertiary institutions administrators, managers and employees, including other stakeholders on conflict management strategies, resolutions and prevention skills.

Conclusion

Conflict is always a part of human existence irrespective of the persons and units or organizations involved. Sometimes conflict brings advantage(s) when it is properly handled but it also leads to disadvantage(s) when wrongly handled. Conflict management is different from conflict resolution. There are different types of conflict management styles, sources and skills of handling conflict to achieve positive result(s) in modern tertiary and other organisations.

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