AN APPRAISAL OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AS A MEANS OF ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to investigate conflict management strategies for organizational development in FUTO and NWRI, recognizing challenges such as stakeholder complexities, hierarchical structures, resistance to change, and external influences. Strategies proposed include fostering dialogue, providing training, and promoting transparency. The objective of the study is to appraise conflict management as a means of organizational development. The study used descriptive survey design and describe particular phenomena focusing upon conflict management as a means of organizational development. The study further explored conflict management in academic institutions like FUTO and NWRI, acknowledging conflicts arising from resource allocation, union disputes, and interpersonal dynamics. Conflict is portrayed as inevitable in human interactions, often stemming from competing interests and diverse beliefs. In Nigeria, higher institutions face organizational conflicts leading to disruptions in academic activities and strained relationships. The study recommended that the identified causes of conflicts, including resource allocation, research priorities, and external influences, underscore the complexity of stakeholder relationships and hierarchical structures within these institutions. Addressing these challenges requires proactive strategies such as fostering open dialogue, providing conflict resolution training, and promoting transparency in decision-making processes.

Keywords: Conflict, Management, Organization and Development

1.0 Introduction

Conflict is an inherent aspect of human interaction, arising when individuals or groups compete for limited resources or hold divergent preferences and beliefs. In organizational settings like FUTO and NWRI, conflict may stem from disputes over resource allocation, disagreements between academic and non-academic staff unions, or clashes in attitudes among diverse personnel (Adei, 2017). Conflict is perceived as a struggle over resources, power, and status, with parties aiming to assert their preferences or gain advantage over opponents. Throughout history, conflict has been studied across various disciplines, influencing societal perspectives and academic discourse.

In Nigerian higher institutions like FUTO and NWRI, organizational conflicts often disrupt academic activities, lead to interpersonal discord, and escalate into violence due to contested citizenship rights, autocratic rule, or unresolved grievances. Recognizing the unique challenges faced by these institutions, it's imperative to explore conflict management strategies to promote organizational development (Bercovitch, 2011). Hence, a study titled "An appraisal of Conflict Management as a means of organizational development: Using FUT, Owerri and National Water Resources Institute, Kaduna as Case Studies" aims to investigate effective conflict resolution approaches in these academic and research institutions. The structure of the work is divided into five chapters. Chapter one touches on introduction,

statement of problem, Chapter two is literature review, Chapter three deals with the methodology, Chapter four data analysis and Chapter five, summary, recommendation

1.1 Problem Statement/Justification

The management of conflict in FUT, Owerri and NWRI, Kaduna has raised concerns due to various dysfunctional occurrences such as discord, disputes, and confrontations. Instances include a retired staff member refusing to vacate staff quarters after receiving benefits, verbal abuses among staff over resource disagreements, and Union members being compelled to work during a nationwide strike. Other issues include inappropriate advances from male colleagues towards female counterparts, cases of inappropriate relationships between female students and married male lecturers, delays in staff confirmation and promotion, and unequal distribution of project responsibilities among staff (Sanda, 2017).. These challenges have led to decreased productivity and hindered organizational development. Recognizing the detrimental impact of conflict, the researcher advocates for further investigation through a study titled "An appraisal of Conflict Management as a means of organizational development: Using National Water Resources Institute, Kaduna as Case Study."

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to appraise conflict management as a means of organizational development. Specifically, the study will, Identify the categories of conflict., Identify the causes of conflict in FUT, Owerri and NWRI, Kaduna. Appraise relationship between conflict management and organizational development. Examine the challenges of the conflict management in FUTO and NWRI. Identify the strategies used for sustainable conflict management in FUTO and NWRI.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Concept of Conflict Management

The primary objective of every organization in society is to establish a conducive environment where employees can efficiently fulfill their responsibilities without encountering any negative influences that may impede the attainment of both individual and organizational objectives. However, conflicts within organizations have become inevitable due to various factors such as competition for authority, position, recognition, and limited resources. Bercovitch (2011) asserts that conflict is an unavoidable aspect of life, often stemming from states of scarce resources, division of responsibilities, power dynamics, and role differentiation. These contentions frequently give rise to conflict, which can either be dysfunctional or functional to organizational effectiveness.

According to Odoh (as cited in Nnam, 2013), conflict management involves measures aimed at reducing tension and mitigating the adverse effects of conflicts by fostering awareness and understanding among the parties involved. Dewa, Corbière, Durand, and Hensel (2012) highlight the importance of effectively managing conflict for business owners, stakeholders, and other relevant parties, as poorly managed conflict can negatively impact organizational effectiveness.

Yusuf-Habeeb and Kazeem (2017) conducted a study on the appraisal of conflict management as a means of achieving industrial harmony, emphasizing the need to prevent disruptive conflicts to sustain harmonious industrial relations. Anku-Tsede and Adjadogo (2016) analyzed the influence of workplace conflict on the attitudes of media employees in Ghana, revealing both negative impacts such as strained relationships and positive aspects such as unity and idea sharing resulting from organizational conflicts.

2.1.1 Concept of Organizational Development

According to Jeong (2008), tension in interpersonal relationships can arise from disagreements stemming from differences in decision-making, power dynamics, and trade imbalances within organizations. These organizations often consist of leaders from both government and multinational corporations, leading to labor-management issues and the need for flexible governance norms to adapt to new employee demands and expectations. Rau-Foster (2017) suggests that change, whether in the home or work environment, can bring about organizational changes resulting from unresolved conflicts. These conflicts can contribute to a decline in organizational productivity and competency, thereby affecting overall organizational development. Positive conflict management practices, as noted by Rau-Foster (2017), include improved decision-making processes, enhanced inclusion, and greater group cohesion. However, conflicts can also have destructive effects on groups if not managed effectively. Such destructive impacts can be witnessed when conflicts interfere with workplace operations, lead to interpersonal hostility, or foster non-cooperation among employees. Additionally, unresolved conflicts may snowball into further problems, potentially escalating to violence (Rahim, 2014).

Morake, Monobwe, and Dimde (2011) argue that conflicts within organizations can result in a lack of communication and personal animosity among members, which can negatively impact both the organization's image and its development. Conflict can have both short-term and long-term consequences that may hinder organizational development. Jeong (2008) suggests that in dealing with conflicts, it's essential to consider various conflict management styles, such as yielding and contending. By understanding these different approaches and the organizational environment, conflicts can be effectively managed to promote organizational development.

2.1.2 Causes of Conflict in Organization

Numerous factors contribute to conflict within organizations, and scholars have offered diverse perspectives on these factors. Odoh (as cited in Nnam, 2013) identifies several causative factors, including delayed or non-payment of wages, management style, employment conditions, employee social awareness, inappropriate termination practices, motivational and promotional issues, ineffective dispute resolution methods, violation of collective agreements, interdependence, management resistance to union involvement, goal disparities, and differences in perception. Similarly, Obasan (2011) acknowledges that conflict arises from diverse perceptions among group members, varying values brought to work, resource inadequacy, attitude diversity leading to conflicting goals, different interpretations of information, and frustration due to goal non-achievement.

Grace (2012) suggests that conflicts may stem from operational or personal factors. She highlights personal issues such as relationship problems with partners or family members, which can result in displaced aggression. Additionally, conflicts may arise from goal disparities between organizational departments, interdependence among departments and members, personality clashes due to individual diversity, and poor communication leading to misunderstandings between management and staff.

Corporate incivility, defined by John-Eke and Gabriel (2019) as rude behaviors exhibited towards employees by organizations or their representatives, can also trigger conflict. This includes organizations' indifferent responses to reports of sexual harassment, discriminatory practices based on factors such as religion, gender, marital status, or ethnicity, and insensitivity to employee concerns. Mishandling of these situations can escalate into conflict within the organization. Roles and expectations also contribute to workplace conflict, as

outlined by Whitlam and Cameron (2012). This refers to discrepancies between job descriptions and actual responsibilities, leading to conflicts within teams, particularly when individual roles are not clearly defined, resulting in differing interpretations of the same role.

2.2 Empirical Literature

Conflict is conceived to be an outcome of behaviour which is an integral part of human life. Dunlop (2020) expresses that conflict is a disagreement between two or more individuals or groups with each individual or group trying to make the other accept its view or position.

Ugbaja (2020) defines organizational conflict as any dispute, individual or group, that arises in the work place which causes disharmony among a group of workers or between an individual and the management. Sinclair (2015) sees conflict as a disagreement between employees and their employers. In analyzing conflict situation in corporate organizations,

McDaniel (2020) explains that organizational conflicts arise because participants in an organization differ in their attitudes, values, beliefs, goals and understanding. For this reason, conflict is unavoidable. This implies that it is the difference in the orientation, personalities and identities of individuals and groups within an organizational framework that brings about organizational conflict. In the context of industrial relations.

Levine (2019) describes organizational conflict as any disagreement between workers and employers over a breach of the tent. As long as workers and employers abide by the terms of agreement there is bound to be organizational harmony. Disagreements arising from breach of the terms of employment contract have been known to result in organizational conflicts. Accommodation and resolution of conflict is the central them and subject-matter of industrial relations.

Bisno, (2018) Conflict management involves implementing strategies to limit the negative aspects of conflict and to increase the positive aspects of conflict at a level equal to or higher than where the conflict is taking place, the aim of conflict management is to enhance learning and group outcomes (effectiveness or performance in organizational setting). It is not concerned with eliminating all conflict or avoiding conflict. Conflict management, as a concept, has been conventionally associated with conflict containment and settlement. Conflict management is the practice of identifying and handling conflict in a sensible, fair, and efficient manner, it requires such skills as effective communicating, problem solving, and negotiating with a focus on interests The ability to cope successfully with conflict is among the most important social skills one can acquire. As people mature, they usually develop behaviours for coping with conflict; there is even some evidence that they develop certain preferred styles (Thomas and Kilmann, 1974). Conflict management skills acquired without formal education or guidance. Usually behaviours modeled after the behaviour of others. If one is fortunate enough to have good models, and if one is lucky enough to be in situations in which the modeled style is effective, one is usually successful. The best way to minimize failure is to learn what styles are available, in what situations they are most effectively employed and how to use them.

The managing organizational conflict is the general framework of the entrance and comprehensive treatment by which means that depend on the resolution of problems and disputes. In addition, the methods of conflict management are in (the loss - the loss, and loss - win - win - win). There methods are one of the most important problems that caused the dissipation of funds and efforts compared to other organizational problems with the prevalence of the use of this kind of methods. The various conflicts that each case may require

the use of a particular strategy and the most important of these methods of organizational conflict are;

Ojo (2015) argues that through avoidance more information is gathered by management on the issue(s) at dispute before a decision is taken. Sometimes, it requires physical separation so as to avoid violent demonstration of grievances and differences which will aggravate the situation.

Accommodation

This technique requires making concession by one of the parties in the dispute in order to resolve the conflict. This is usually appropriate when one party is interested in satisfying the other party's interest more than his/her own interest. Ojo (2015), states that it is appropriate when the issue is more important to the other party. Sacrifice and concessions are made to please the opponent so as to maintain the relationship. Often this earns one social credit that will be used later for commendation.

Adei (2017) expresses that one party uses superior skill and intelligence to beat the other. This technique is appropriate when there is need for quick decisive action regarding matters that are vital to organization's effectiveness. A decision from higher authority may not only reduce manifestation of conflict but also the cause of the dispute.

Ananaba 2011). Through this technique, each disputant makes a concession or give up something of value in order to resolve the conflict. This leads to "no winner, no loser." It means shifting ground a bit to reach a common ground,

Collaboration

This technique requires consultation, discussion and negotiation between all the parties in dispute. (Ananaba 2011) expresses that when the conflicting parties openly discuss all relevant issues in an open and honest manner, tempers are cooled and solution found. It works well when it is important to find a joint solution and this leads to a "wins a win" situation.

Visinki (2015) cited in Saduna (2017) agrees the above authors that one of the five methods of coping with conflict is competition. The competition approach to conflict resolution is an attempt at complete victory (Saduna, 2017). It is a win/lose approach, a "winner takes all" position. Usually, the focus is on winning the conflict at all costs, rather than seeking the most appropriate solution for everyone concerned. The second method of coping with conflict is accommodation, which is the opposite of competition. It is a lose/win approach. The third method is avoidance, where both sides in the conflict withdraw. It is referred to as the lose/lose outcome in managing conflict because neither side is able even to deal with the issue, much less manage or resolve it. The fourth one is collaboration, which is usually considered the best method to cope with conflict. It is called a win/win approach. It does not require either side to give up a valued position. Rather, both sides honestly seek new and common higher grounds. This kind of problem-solving requires an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect, the surfacing of hidden agendas, and a genuine willingness on both sides to resolve the conflict. The fifth method is compromise-conflict resolution. It involves negotiation and a high degree of flexibility. It is referred to as the win/losewin/lose position since both parties in the conflict will get some of what they want, while at the same time giving up something in the process.

2. Gap in literature.

Several studies have centered their research on conflict managements and different approaches to resolving such conflict. This work focuses more on FUT Owerri and National Water Resources Institute, Kaduna as a case study which makes it unique in this approach of gaining firsthand information on how conflict can be identified and addressed within the required methodology

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study used descriptive survey design. According to Orodho (2004), descriptive research design attempts to describe particular phenomena focusing upon an issue of what is happening, on how much has happened and why. Descriptive survey design was used by the researcher to gather information, summarize, present and interpret it so as to obtain more clarification on issues. In survey design, the participants answer questions by use of interviews and questionnaires thereafter the researcher describes the responses given. The questions is properly constructed and clearly written for ease in understanding and for the survey to be both reliable and valid. This design is of interest to the researcher since it focuses more on the situation already existing in the field. The study was thus able to generalize the findings to the whole population of the study.

3.2 Population of the Study/ Sample Size

The population used in this study is made up of academic and non-academic staff of FUTO and NWRI. Based on the records from the Institutes, there are 461 academic staffs. While the non-academic staffs are made up of 1126 technical/technologist, making a total of 1587 staff.

3.3 Method of Data Analysis

Given the population of the study, Taro Yamane (1967) technique was applied in determining the sample size. The sample size used for the study is 319.47 which is approximately 319 respondents.

A sample size was calculated using Yamane (1967) formula as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1587}{1 + 1587(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1587}{1 + 39675}$$

$$n = \frac{1587}{4.39675}$$

$$n = 319.47$$

3.4 Method of Data Collection

Two approaches will be adopted in collecting the data. These include:

Administration of Questionnaires The researchers personally visit the Federal University of Technology, Owerri and National Water Resources Institute, (NWRI) Kaduna and administer the questionnaires to those that were selected for the study. Because of the pressure of work, they will be allowed to complete the questionnaires within two days. After the two days, the researchers will go back and retrieve the ready copies.

Interview: The researchers also select some of the staff of FUTO and NWRI for interview, this enables the researchers to obtain relevant information which ordinarily the respondents could not disclose in the questionnaires.

4.0 Data Analysis and Result of Findings

4.1 Questionnaire Returned

A total of 319 respondents were issued with questionnaires to fill in FUT, Owerri and NWRI Kaduna. 150 questionnaires were distributed to FUT, Owerri and 165 to NWRI, Kaduna State and only 305 were returned. This represented a response rate of 95.6% while 14 questionnaires were not returned which represents 4.4%. According to (Kothari, 2010) a response rate of more than 75% is sufficient for conducting a study.

4.1.1 Demographical Analysis

The demography of the respondents for this study covered their characteristics such as gender, educational level and job rank. The analysis and breakdown of the demographic characteristics of respondents is shown in the table below. The table shows that 55.4 per cent of the samples are male, while respondents who indicated diploma are 40 per cent. These percentages for the gender and education align with those of the general population. Thus, the sample is representative of the population.

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	169	55.4
Female	136	44.6
Total	305	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2: Educational Level

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
Certificate	61	20
Diploma	122	40
Graduate	67	22
Postgraduate	31	10
Tertiary	24	8
Total	305	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

4.1.2 Categories of Organizational Conflicts

Organizational conflicts in Nigeria, like in many other contexts, can stem from various sources within the workplace. Below are briefly discussed five categories fo , along with detailed discussions:

Cultural Differences and Diversity: Nigeria is a culturally diverse nation with over 250 ethnic groups, each with its own language, traditions, and norms. In the workplace, cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings, miscommunication, and conflicts. For instance, employees from different ethnic backgrounds may have distinct communication styles, approaches to problem-solving, and expectations regarding hierarchy and authority. Without proper understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity, conflicts may arise due to perceived disrespect, favoritism, or exclusion.

Resource Allocation and Scarcity: Nigeria faces challenges related to resource scarcity and uneven distribution of resources across different sectors of the economy. In organizations, conflicts may arise over the allocation of limited resources such as funding, equipment, and manpower. Competing interests among departments or individuals vying for a share of scarce resources can lead to tensions and disputes. Moreover, perceptions of unfairness or inequity in resource allocation processes can exacerbate conflicts and erode trust within the organization.

Leadership and Power Dynamics: Conflicts may arise from power struggles, leadership styles, and perceptions of authority within organizations. In Nigeria, hierarchical structures and autocratic leadership styles are common in some organizations, leading to tensions between managers and subordinates. Discrepancies in power dynamics, where certain individuals or groups wield disproportionate influence, can result in resentment and resistance among employees. Moreover, conflicts may emerge when leaders fail to effectively communicate goals, expectations, and decisions to their teams.

Organizational Change and Resistance: Nigeria's dynamic business environment often necessitates organizational change, whether due to technological advancements, market shifts, or regulatory reforms. However, implementing change initiatives can trigger resistance and conflicts among employees who are resistant to unfamiliar or disruptive changes. Resistance may stem from fear of job insecurity, loss of status, or uncertainty about the future. Moreover, insufficient communication and consultation during the change process can exacerbate resistance and undermine employee morale.

Interpersonal Relationships and Communication: Conflicts often arise from interpersonal dynamics and breakdowns in communication within organizations. In Nigeria, cultural factors, language barriers, and hierarchical structures can impede effective communication and collaboration among employees. Misunderstandings, rumors, and gossip can escalate into conflicts if not addressed promptly. Moreover, conflicts may arise from personality clashes, differing work styles, and unresolved grievances between individuals or teams.

4.1.3 Causes of Conflict in FUT, Owerri and NWRI, Kaduna

Identified Causes of Conflicts in FUT, Owerri and NWRI, Kaduna

S/N	Conflicts	FUT, Owerri	NWRI, Kaduna
1.	Resource Allocation	120	152
2.	Research Priorities	107	133
3.	Personnel Issues	121	127
4.	Academic Freedom	139	154
5.	Policy and Governance	142	144
6.	External Factors	133	138
7.	Environmental Concerns	149	145

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From the questionnaire distributed 120, 107, 121, 139, 142, 133, 149, 112 and 128 respondents agreed in FUT, owerri that resource allocation, research priorities, personnel issues, academic freedom, policy and governance, external factors and environmental concerns are identified causes of conflicts in FUT, Owerri respectively and 152, 133, 127, 154, 144, 138 and 145 respondents in NWRI, Kaduna agreed that resource allocation, research priorities, personnel issues, academic freedom, policy and governance, external factors and environmental concerns respectively.

4.1.4 Challenges of the Conflict Management in FUTO and NWRI

Conflict management in FUTO and NWRI presents several challenges which includes:

Complexity of Stakeholder Relationships: This is a great challenge most especially in FUTO as more than 80% of the respondents strongly agreed and 47% of NWRI also agreed that complexity of stakeholder relationship is quite difficult to manage because conflict do arise between faculty members and administrators over academic policies or resource allocation. For instance, faculty members may advocate for increased funding for research while administrators prioritize budget allocations for infrastructure improvements. Navigating these conflicting interests requires understanding the perspectives of both groups and finding mutually acceptable solutions.

Hierarchical Structures: Institutional organizations often have hierarchical structures and bureaucratic processes that can impede effective conflict resolution. The staffs from the selected organizations noted that conflicts usually ascend between lower-level employees and middle management over work assignment or performance evaluations. Lower-level employees may feel disempowered to voice their concerns due to hierarchical structures that favor managerial authority.

Resistance to Change: In FUT, Owerri and NWRI Kaduna state it was discovered during the survey that conflicts arises between frontline employees and senior management over proposed organizational restructuring or polity changes. Frontline employees resist change due to concerns about job security or disruptions to establish workflows.

External Influences: In these institutions precisely NWRI, conflicts do arise between internal stakeholders and external partners over campaign strategies or policy advocacy efforts. External stakeholders, such as corporate entities, exert influence on the organization's agenda

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or decision-making processes. Managing conflicts in this context requires balancing internal priorities with external pressures and maintaining transparency in relationships with external partners.

4.1.5 Strategies to Mitigate Challenges

Complexity of Stakeholder Relationships: Facilitate regular meetings and forums involving both faculty members and administrators to foster open dialogue and collaboration. Establish clear channels for communication and feedback to ensure that the perspectives of both groups are heard and considered. Implement joint decision-making processes that involve stakeholders in identifying shared goals and finding mutually acceptable solutions to conflicts over academic policies or resource allocation.

Hierarchical Structures: Provide conflict resolution training and support for both lower-level employees and middle management to help them effectively navigate conflicts. Create opportunities for informal communication and feedback mechanisms to encourage lower-level employees to voice their concerns without fear of reprisal. Consider restructuring hierarchical processes to promote a more collaborative and inclusive organizational culture that empowers all employees to participate in conflict resolution.

Resistance to Change: Engage frontline employees in the change process through transparent communication, involvement in decision-making, and opportunities for feedback. Provide training and support to help employees understand the rationale and benefits of proposed organizational restructuring or policy changes. Address concerns about job security or disruptions by clearly communicating how proposed changes will benefit the organization and its employees in the long run.

External Influences: Establish clear boundaries and protocols for managing relationships with external stakeholders to mitigate undue influence on internal conflict resolution processes. Ensure transparency in decision-making processes by involving internal stakeholders in discussions about campaign strategies or policy advocacy efforts. Foster collaboration and partnership with external stakeholders to address shared challenges and promote mutually beneficial outcomes while safeguarding the organization's internal priorities and interests.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

The data collected from the questionnaire distributed among respondents at FUTO, Owerri, and NWRI, Kaduna, sheds light on the identified causes of conflicts and the challenges faced in conflict management. In both institutions, issues such as resource allocation, research priorities, personnel matters, and external influences emerged as significant contributors to conflicts which contradicts the works of (Dunlop, 2012).

One major challenge highlighted is the complexity of stakeholder relationships, particularly the conflict between faculty members and administrators over academic policies and resource allocation. Additionally, hierarchical structures and resistance to change pose obstacles to effective conflict resolution, as conflicts often arise between lower-level employees and management, and frontline employees resist organizational restructuring or policy changes.

To mitigate these challenges, strategies such as fostering open dialogue, providing conflict resolution training, and promoting transparency in decision-making processes are recommended. By addressing these challenges head-on, both FUTO and NWRI can foster a more collaborative and inclusive organizational culture, ultimately leading to more effective conflict management and organizational success.

5.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings from the questionnaire distributed among respondents at FUTO, Owerri, and NWRI, Kaduna, highlight the significant challenges faced in conflict management within institutional organizations. The study recommended that the identified causes of conflicts, including resource allocation, research priorities, and external influences, underscore the complexity of stakeholder relationships and hierarchical structures within these institutions. Addressing these challenges requires proactive strategies such as fostering open dialogue, providing conflict resolution training, and promoting transparency in decision-making processes. By implementing these strategies, FUTO and NWRI can overcome the obstacles to effective conflict management and create a more collaborative and inclusive organizational culture. Ultimately, this will contribute to enhanced organizational success and the achievement of institutional goals.

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