

**ASSESSING THE CONNUBIAL OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS FROM THE PARADIGM OF SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY.**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of Conflict Management Strategies on Organizational Effectiveness of selected international oil producing companies in Nigeria. The study adopted the survey-cross sectional approach with a sample size of 300 Oil producing companies chosen based Onkrejcie and Morgan model. Copies of the survey instrument were distributed to the senior managers of the 300 companies that form the sample size. 226, representing 81% of the research instrument was retrieved which was finally used to analyze data received for the purpose of testing hypotheses. The hypotheses were tested using Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient with the aid of SPSS version 20. The result of the tested hypotheses shows a significant relationship between the two variables. The study concludes that there is a strong positive relationship between conflict management strategies and organizational effectiveness in the oil producing companies in Nigeria. Therefore, we recommend that it is critically important for managers at every level in the oil producing companies to be trained and retrained in conflict management strategies in order to improve productivity and effectiveness.*

**KEYWORDS:** Conflict Management Strategies, Organizational Effectiveness, Productivity, Survival

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Conflict in an organization is a state of discord by the actual and opposing powers which arise from the pursuit of divergent interests, goals and aspirations by individuals and groups in the organization or social environment. This is so because changes in the social environment, such as different ideologies, beliefs, principles and social status which develop a sense of tussle and disagreement with each other and when this happens, the productivity and survival of such organization is undermined (Owoseni, 2012). The researcher is looking at the effective conflict management strategy or strategies that can be adopted in the organization to manage conflict situations without rendering the organization porous for incessant conflicts.

Contrary to the prevailing perception, conflict indeed had played quite a positive role in several respects for progressive and good governance of the corporations. After reconciliation of the conflicting parties, better ideas are produced, clarification of individual views, people willingly search for new approaches, and long-standing problems brought to the surface and resolved. Awan and Anjum (2015) maintain that properly managed conflict promotes open communication, collaborative decision making, regular feedback, and timely resolution of conflicts. Open communication and collaboration enhance the flow of new ideas and strengthen work relationship, which can have a positive effect on employee morale. Regular

feedback and timely resolution of conflict has the potential of improving employee satisfaction and job performance. Awan and Anjum (2015) argue that a negative work environment that does not promote conflict resolution can result in poor employee behavior and job performance. Unmanaged conflict promotes dysfunctional communication and poor behaviour among staff. Poor behaviour on the part of one employee has the power to affect overall employee morale, which results in lower productivity. According to Dana (2000), conflict is not just an annoyance. It costs money and those costs can be calculated, in terms of wasted time, bad decision, lost employees. In the health care industry, patients' health and even their lives can be affected by unmanaged conflict.

Awan and Ibrahim (2015) contend that if the individuals do not have the communication or interpersonal skills to resolve their disputes, the conflict can grow and spread to others, eventually affecting their job performance, which, in turn, affects the job satisfaction of others as well, in addition to the staff not having the communication skill(s) to address their disputes, their leaders often lack the necessary skills to be effective in conflict resolution.

Hence the need to ascertain whether conflict affect only the employees, the management or the entire organization and how it affects economic development and what will happen if an existing conflict is poorly managed. It is against this backdrop that this research is deemed necessary to empirically determine the relationship between conflict management strategies and organizational effectiveness of selected oil producing companies in the Niger Delta geo-political region, of Nigeria.

## **LITERATURE**

The formation of successful relationship between managers and employees, which is one of the core elements of conflict management theory, is based upon the social exchange theory and the equity theory. Social exchange involves the exchange of tangible and intangible resource between interdependent parties with an expected benefit to both of them (Homans, 1958). Social exchange relationships are based on the feeling of common purpose between different parties of specific relationship and its fulfillment (Gouldner, 1960). These parties will not carry out their obligation in this relationship unless they see that the other party has something of value to offer (Chiaburn and Marinova, 2006). Therefore, fulfilling obligations constitutes the vital aspect in any social exchange relationship (Rousseu, 1990). For example, beneficial actions aimed at employees by the organization and its representatives facilitate the establishment of high-quality exchange relationships that create obligations for workers to reciprocate in positive ways (Settoon et al, 1996). Employees' beliefs as regards the reciprocal obligations existing between their managers and them also rely on the equity theory (Adams, 1963) which posited that employees evaluate their effectiveness by comparing their inputs and outputs.

### **Conflict Management**

Consequently, conflict management orientation is a highly obstructive process which can be implemented in a number of diverse ways in organizations to achieve desire set of goals.

Ford (2007) posited a four-way process which includes assessment and inquiry, design, implementation and evaluation aimed at achieving efficacious and objective conflict decision

in the work place. This accommodating approach is often employed to encourage management to satisfy the needs of stakeholders in the management of conflict.

Vigil and King (2000) observed that the use of accommodating strategy in managing conflict is likely to create better results and higher commitment in individuals than teams using non-integrative conflict management styles. The accommodating approach broadens the understanding of the conflict or problem area and increases effectiveness.

According to Rahim (2002) conflict management involves designing effective strategy to minimize the dysfunctions of conflict and enhance the constructive functions in order to optimize learning and effectiveness of an organization. This implies that managing conflict does not necessarily connote avoidance or termination but the decrease of the odds of non-productive escalation.

As such, conflict management is the method by which organizations and people handle grievances or disputes so as to find a mid-way alternative to increase resolution, work towards consensus and offer genuine commitment to decision-making. As observed by Uchendu, Anijaobi and Odigwe (2013), since conflict is inevitable in organizations, its management determines whether it will generate positive or negative effect on the organizational effectiveness. The timely recognition and immediate explication of the underlying tension before the conflict issues go out of hand are germane to effectual management of conflicts in the workplace.

Thomas (1976) also put forward some approaches for managing conflicts. These are avoidance, accommodation, compromise and collaboration. The avoidance strategy is called conflict avoidance. Any organization using this method is sitting on a keg of gun-powder. The accommodation strategy believes that no amount of sacrifice is too much to allow peace to reign. It is a palliative technique which involves capitulation and appeasement.

The competition strategy involves the survival of the fittest and win-lose method, without taking other party into consideration. In the compromise strategy, parties to the conflict are willing to give up something in order to settle the conflict.

The last approach is collaboration which is a win-win approach whereby parties to a conflict are prepared, willing and ready to satisfy each other's demands fully. Except for the collaboration strategy which is reflected in behaviours that are both cooperative and assertive, all other approaches depend majorly on the structure of the organization, because they provide a short-term solution to conflict situations.

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

Conflict also provides good or bad results or outcome depending on the manner it is interpreted, understood and resolved by the affected parties. She therefore suggested three different ways of managing or resolving conflict in an organization viz: Dominance, Compromise and Integration. **Dominance:** the management of conflict through dominance implies a victory for one party over the other. It would require the use of force and suppression of the party by the strong. In this case, it does not necessarily mean that the conflict is resolved. As far as Follett is concerned, this method of managing conflict is like sweeping the dust under the carpet. Sapru, (2009). **Compromise:** under this method, each party in the conflict situation surrenders certain value or interests in order to allow peace to reign. She points, out however, that, just like the first method (domination), this method has its own shortcoming with the magnitude of the shortcomings depending on each conflict situation, environment and the extent of the compromise or values surrendered by each party in the conflict (Ngu, 2008). She warns however, that a conflict resolved through this method is not the best, despite its wide acceptance, because it may simply suspend yet a greater magnitude of the problem which is likely to resurface in either the same form or in an entirely different manner. Often, also people resist the temptations of reaching compromise due to ego clashes or stated positions (Sapru, 2009). **Integration:** in giving preference for the resolution of social conflict through integration', Follett argues that when conflicting interest meet, they need not oppose, but only confront. What should be sought in this confrontation of differing interest is an integration that gives all parties what they really desire (Sapru, 2009). This seems to receive the approval of Follett as the best. Each party has to recognize the importance of x-raying all the various aspects of the conflict to be put forward for discussion, usually in round table conference.

Organizational effectiveness (OE) commonly referred to when discussing organizations that have achieved maximum performance. In order to achieve increased and sustainable business results, organizations need to execute strategy and engage employees. Effectiveness defined as simply having the intended outcome. In an organizational context, the intended outcome is the goal of the organization that often expressed in a mission statement.

Organizational effectiveness proposes to a large concept and acquires into its thought the variables of objective achievement along the organizational and departmental plane. Ordinarily, the goal model defines the principle of effectiveness as a complete or in some example partial realization of the organization's goals (Etzioni, 1964; Sandefer, 1998). The efficiency important to organizations in the result of the great development, and intense competition for survival and continuity, has been sought by a number of researchers who are interested in finding a theory adopted by organizations in order to be effective. Organizational effectiveness is the level to which an organization recognizes its objective (Daft, 1995).

This research, evaluate organizational effectiveness that were adopted from Lee and Choi (2003) which encompass organizational members' observation of the degree of the overall achievement, profitability, growth rate, and innovativeness of the organization in comparison with key competitors. The sixties and early seventies views changed the concept of the effectiveness of the organization's ability to survive to the standards partial to measure effectiveness (such as the morale of the workers, the incidence of work-related injuries and the percentage of absenteeism and turnover of work, which was considered indicators of the effectiveness of regulations. There who see that the effects effectively the organization is culture powerful her work environment and positive team spirit and team work loyalty to the

group, trust and safety and communication between management and employees (Daft, 2001). This is what organization theory seeks. Concerned with identifying the concept of organization theory or clear concepts of organizational effectiveness of the most important foundations of the theory of regulation: how job is designed, and identify the roles of personnel, labour relations, including, factors specific to the effectiveness of the organization. In addition, the extent of the diversity and multiplicity of standards proposed measures of effectiveness and the degree of discrepancy between them (Weshahi, 2002).

While, the team adopted a third link between economic indicators and behavioral indices together, with absenteeism and turnover, accidents, satisfaction and motivation and organizational goals, training and development, communication and stability, adaptation and evaluation by factors and the value of human resources, participation and skills of individuals and the performance and flexibility as behavioral indicators (Daft, 2001). Therefore, organizational effectiveness can be said to be the ability of the organization to achieve her goals of long-and short-term balance of power that reflects the views of the impact and the interests of stakeholders and the evaluation stage of growth or development experienced by the organization (Najat Qureshi .2006).

The organization effectiveness as a function of “the ability of the organization to achieve its objectives and adopt this capability and the criteria used measured in the model used in the study of organizations (Saleh, 2006). In addition, it is clear that there is close contact between the effectiveness of the organization and goals, as the goals and endpoint or outcome to reach or attain. In order for Organizations to be effective (up to the point when it achieved its objectives and the basis of the planning function that determines the goals to be accessible), it must be better lighted than the administrative strategies to achieve these goals. Furthermore, the measures of organizational effectiveness are discussed further.

### **Productivity**

The purpose of measuring firm-level of productivity is to evaluate the efficiency with which inputs are transformed into outputs. The most common type of productivity measures is the simple or single factors, ratio of output to a specific type of input, such as sales per employees.

Stevenson, William (1998) noted that the productivity of an organization is the ability it has to produce a goods or service. More specifically, productivity of an organization is the measure of how its specified resources are managed to accomplish timely objectives as stated in terms of quality and quantity.

Vora& Jay (1992), posits that productivity is an objective of concept. As an objective concept it can be measure, ideally against a universal standard. As such, organization can monitor productivity for strategic reasons such as corporate planning, organization improvement, or comparison to competitors. It can also be used for tactical reasons such as project control or controlling performance to budget.

Plenart Gerhard (2001), stated that organizational productivity is also a scientific concept, and hence can be logically define and empirically observed. It can also be measured in quantitative terms, which qualities it as a variable, therefore it can be defined and measured in absolute or relative terms. However, an absolute definition of organizational productivity is

not very useful (Ojielo 2000). It is much more useful as a concept dealing with relative productivity or as a productivity factor.

### **Survival**

Organizational survival is very crucial at this period of business turbulence. Maintaining a place in this competitive era becomes not only the responsibility of the owners or leaders of the organization but that of the employees. Employees are part of the company's resources which has been found to appreciate with time by knowledge gained, skills, abilities and experience. The success of business depends on collaboration and stakeholder shared interests, they must be working for the same purpose, otherwise business will come to an end and new collaborations will be formed (Venkatarman, 2001). Thus, involvement of employees in the firm's strategic decision making is tapping into their knowledge and experience for gaining competitive advantage and earning a retained workforce. Surviving in the global struggle to meet with increasing conflict on firms in the workplace has seen many researchers and academicians having a resort to pay attention to the individual employees and environment of the organization since conflict management in the organization is a key to organizational effectiveness.

### **Conflict Management Strategies and Organizational Effectiveness.**

Hefferman and Flood (2006), stated that as a concept in modern management, organizational effectiveness suffered from problems of conceptual clarity in a number of areas. The first was the area of definition while the second was that of measurement. The term effectiveness was sometimes confused with productivity. Effectiveness is a broader indicator that could include productivity as well as quality, survival, consistency and other factors.

Conflict management has been the most vital issues for every organization either profit or non-profit making organization. It is expedient for managers to know the factors that affect the effectiveness of the organization.

According to Rivers (2005), the hidden costs of unresolved conflict in organizations are enormous and finding effective ways to manage and resolve organizational conflicts can have a significant impact on productivity and hence organizational survival. However, it is quite difficult in actual sense to measure effectiveness, but in this context, effectiveness is taken to be the productivity level i.e. the relationship between input and output.

Sambamurthy and Poole (1992) noted that the organizational effectiveness depends on organizational commitment, quality, motivation, negative resistance to change that we use these in our research. Whether and how a particular way of managing conflict can influences team effectiveness has been studied extensively in the field research. Much of this research has been inspired by Deutsch's Theory of Cooperation and Competition (1973), and reviews of this literature suggest that when teams manage conflicts through collaborating, avoidance strategy, and other factors like accommodation, organizations' effectiveness is enhanced. In contrast, when teams manage conflicts through contending, organizational effectiveness suffers (Tjosvold, 1997). Laboratory experiments on collaboration emphasized the importance of pro-social motives and concomitant collaborating behavior as a way to solve conflicts about opposing interests (Dreu et al.) Field research stresses the importance of cooperative goals and concomitant 'constructive controversy the open-minded discussion about opposing ideas, feelings and opinions.

On the whole, these studies converge on the conclusion that conflict management tools such as collaborating, accommodating and so on will tend to increase individual and organizational effectiveness, as exemplified by greater productivity and feelings of self-efficacy among conflict parties, more mutually beneficial solutions, reduced likelihood of future conflict, and better goal achievement.

Hence, we hypothesize that

H<sub>01</sub>: there is no significant relationship between conflict management strategies and organizational effectiveness.

### Method

This study generated data from 300 senior staff of IOCs operating in the Nigeria and was conducted in a non-contrived setting as a cross sectional survey, of the returned survey 226 was useful and form the basis for data analysis in testing the stated hypothesis. The study unit of analysis was at the individual level of the organization. The study relies on extant literature for the survey instruments used to measure the study variables. Response to each of the item in the research instrument was rated using 5-point Likert scale. For test of reliability of the scale the following Cronbach's alpha coefficient were obtained Collaborating (0.861) Accommodating (0.766) Avoiding (0.731) Productivity (0.815) Survival (0.777), according to Nunnaly's model the reliability level of the study scale is confirmed to be acceptable.

### DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

At our secondary level of analysis, inferential statistics such as Pearson r correlation coefficients and Regression coefficients including the p-values, were calculated for purposes of testing the research hypotheses. Correlation analyses using the Pearson r correlation were interpreted based on Guilford's (1956) scale given in Irving (2005). The correlation coefficients (r), which were all significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) and coefficient of determination (r<sup>2</sup>) are shown in tables 1. The coefficient (r) for the hypothesis is 0.812;

**Table 1 Correlations Analysis showing the Relationship between conflict management strategies and organizational effectiveness**

Correlations				
Type	Variables1	Statistics	Conflict Management	Organizational Effectiveness
Spearman's rho	Conflict management strategies	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.812 **
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	226	226
	Organizational effectiveness	Correlation Coefficient	.812 **	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	226	226

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Source: SPSS 20.0 outputs based on 2018 field survey data.*

Table 1 shows that the Spearman's correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.812^{**}$ ), this value is high, implying that a strong relationship exists between conflict management strategies and organizational effectiveness. The positive sign of the correlation coefficient means that a positive relationship exists between them. That implies that improvement in conflict management strategy will result in organizational effectiveness in the studied firms. The probability/ significant value (PV) =  $0.000 < 0.05$  (level of significance) therefore a significant relationship exists between conflict management strategy and organizational effectiveness.

### Test of Hypotheses

Decision Rule: If the t-cal is  $< t$ -tab accept the null hypothesis, otherwise reject but if t-cal  $> t$ -tab, accepted the alternate hypothesis otherwise rejected

### Effects of conflict management strategies on organizational effectiveness

**Table 2: Summary of Regression Analysis result showing the Effects of conflict management strategies on organizational effectiveness**

Variables	Coef.	t-cal	sig. t	t-tab (0.05, 225)	r	R <sup>2</sup>	F-cal	F-tab (0.05, 1, 224)	sig f
Constant	0.204	1.245	0.215	1.96	0.816	0.666	446.7	3.84	0.000
CMS	0.880	21.136	0.000						

Dependent Variable; organizational effectiveness

Source: SPSS 20.0 Output (based on field survey data 2018).

$$OE = a_0 + a_1CMS + U_1$$

$$OE = 0.204 + 0.880CMS$$

$$T\text{-values} = (1.245) (21.136)$$

Table 2 above showed that the correlation coefficient is 0.816. This implies that a very strong correlation exists between the explanatory variable and the dependent variable. (Correlation coefficient  $r$  is closer to 1). The Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ ) = 0.665. It implies that 66.5% variation in Organizational effectiveness is explained by variations in conflict management strategies. This is an indication that the model has a good fit (Explanation is  $> 50\%$ ). The remaining 33.5% is explained by other variables not included in the model. The F-calculated of 446.7 had a corresponding significant f-value of 0.000; the researcher therefore concludes a good and useful model. Conventionally  $F\text{-cal} = 446.7 > F\text{-tab}_{(0.05, 1, 224)} = 3.84$  hence the decision of a useful model is accepted.

The test of significance conducted as shown in table 1 above shows that conflict management strategies significantly influence Organizational effectiveness (PV =  $0.000 < 0.05$ ). More so,  $t\text{-cal} = 21.136 > t\text{-tab}_{(0.05, 224)} = 1.96$  therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate accepted hence we conclude that there is a statistically significant relationship between conflict management strategies and organizational effectiveness.



## DISCUSSION

Although, scholars have reasoned that conflict cannot be completely ruled out in any organization hence different organizations adopt diverse strategies in tackling conflicts (Uchede, Anijaobi & Odigove, 2013) however, frequent occurrence of organizational conflict have an adverse effect on the organization effectiveness in terms of loss of production hour, reduction in profits, and of course reduction in income level of the organization. In other to avoid the adverse effect of conflict, Ubhenin, (2013) pointed out that organizations that adopt collaborating strategy increases their productivity and foster harmony amongst its workforce.

Furthermore, the findings of this study showed that collaborating strategy has a significant positive relationship with the two measures of organizational effectiveness used in this study (productivity and survival) with correlation-coefficient values of 0.621 and 0.756. The results corroborate with the studies of (Segal and Smith 2013) they posit that several dimensions of managing conflict which includes collaborating between the parties engenders high performance.

Also, the findings agree with the conclusion of (Orji, 2010), whose study showed that, using collaborating style gets the actors to a conflict committed to their task, without supervision.

The mode of choice, as shown in the literature, is Collaboration (Confrontation). Its true meaning is creating a Win–Win solution for all involved by openly and freely discussing the issues and sharing views about where there is a disagreement. Intervention aimed at maximizing assertive and cooperative behaviour, to promote collaboration would benefit managers and the environments in which they work (Barton 1991, Marquis & Huston 1996).

Conflict resolution represents the one-best-way long-term approach, which emphasizes that contextual variables are changeable and that the ideal organization should be brought nearer by all manner of means. Successful conflict resolution strategy not only removes frustration but also leads to higher effectiveness, trust and openness (Van de Vliert 1998)

Furthermore, in order to maintain relationship one party is ready to place another party's interests above its own interests. Over the years many researchers have observed that accommodation strategy has positive relationship with organizational effectiveness (Chih-Sheng, 2012). The result of this study showed that accommodation strategy is a strong dimension of conflict management that positively and significantly relate with organizational effectiveness (productivity and survival), this implies that improvement in accommodating strategy directly affect organizational effectiveness in the studied firms. Also, the findings agree with the conclusions of Vigil and King (2000). They observed that the use of accommodating strategy in managing conflict is likely to create better result and higher commitment in individuals in the organization, and that accommodating approach to conflict resolution broadens the understanding of the problem and increases organizational effectiveness. The study in line with the findings of Thomas (1992) showed that firms that use accommodating strategy in addressing conflict at work substantially influence individual, group and organizational effectiveness.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

On the basis of the analysis and results of this study we drew the following conclusions. The study showed that there is a significantly positive relationship between conflict management strategies and organizational effectiveness. This means that the aspects of conflict management strategies (collaboration, accommodation and avoiding strategy) as used in this study must be considered for organizational effectiveness of productivity and survival. Hence, we recommend that: Management of oil and gas companies should adopt a blend of management strategies in managing conflicts in their organization for higher effectiveness and that Conflict at whatever level should be effectively managed for better productivity in the workplace. This can be achieved by operationalizing any of the known strategies.

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