



CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE OF FEDERAL MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE ENUGU.

Emmanuel Juliet Nkechi

Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences,
Enugu State University of Science and Technology.

Email: julietemmandu@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT: *This study examines the impact of conflict management strategies, specifically collaboration and negotiation, on employee performance within the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Enugu. Given the negative effects of unresolved workplace conflicts on productivity, staff morale, and organizational efficiency in public institutions, the research addresses a significant gap in empirical studies on conflict resolution within the Nigerian civil service. Anchored in the Dual Concern Theory, the study employed a descriptive survey design and gathered primary data using structured questionnaires administered to 193 employees, selected from a total population of 371 using Taro Yamane's formula. Data analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics and the Z test. The results indicate that both collaboration and negotiation strategies have a significant and positive effect on performance metrics such as job efficiency, punctuality, teamwork, and commitment to tasks. The study concludes that adopting inclusive and constructive conflict resolution methods enhances employee engagement and promotes better organizational outcomes. It recommends the formal integration of collaborative practices and structured negotiation processes into the ministry's administrative procedures to cultivate a more cohesive and productive workplace. This research adds to the body of public sector management literature by offering evidence-based insights into how effective conflict management can improve employee performance in bureaucratic settings.*

KEYWORDS: Conflict management, Collaboration strategy, Negotiation strategy, Employee performance.



INTRODUCTION

Conflict is an inherent aspect of organizational dynamics and, when properly addressed, can become a catalyst for positive change. It typically arises when individuals or groups perceive clashes in their objectives, values, or interests. In bureaucratic public agencies like the Federal Ministry of Agriculture in Enugu, conflicts often stem from departmental rivalry, policy discrepancies, overlapping functions, leadership disagreements, and interpersonal tensions among a diverse workforce. When unresolved, such conflicts can lead to serious organizational dysfunctions that are diminishing employee productivity, disrupting inter-agency collaboration, delaying project implementation, and ultimately obstructing the ministry's core objectives.

As a pivotal institution in driving agricultural policy and ensuring food security in the region, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture in Enugu relies on the coordinated efforts of several specialized departments, including Agricultural Extension, Veterinary Services, Policy Planning, Agribusiness Development, and Research Coordination. Effective communication and collaboration are vital to achieving its complex mandates. However, the rigid, top-down administrative structure typical of Nigerian public institutions often hampers open dialogue and fosters interdepartmental friction. Challenges such as a lack of transparency, inefficient communication channels, favoritism, perceived unfairness in promotions, and political meddling further deepen these tensions. The result is often demotivated staff, insubordination, frequent absenteeism, disengagement, and declining performance levels (Ogunyemi & Adeleke, 2022).

Managing conflict, therefore, is not merely a reactive necessity but a proactive strategy for enhancing organizational performance and employee efficiency. Conflict management encompasses various techniques aimed at resolving disagreements constructively so that they do not disrupt operations but instead lead to learning, adaptation, and innovation (Rahim, 2019). Among the most effective conflict resolution methods are the collaboration and negotiation strategies, both of which create pathways for resolving disputes while fostering improved staff performance.

Employee performance in the public sector, particularly within the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Enugu, has consistently been challenged by recurring workplace conflicts stemming from hierarchical rigidity, overlapping roles, poor communication, favoritism, and resource constraints. These internal conflicts, if not constructively managed, often translate into low morale, reduced commitment, decreased productivity, and overall organizational inefficiency. As a key ministry tasked with the critical responsibility of implementing national agricultural policies and driving rural development, the inability to effectively manage internal discord threatens the achievement of its operational and developmental objectives.

Despite the recognition that conflict is an inevitable element of organizational life, evidence suggests that the prevailing approach to conflict management in many Nigerian public institutions remains reactive, top-down, and punitive in nature. Supervisors and unit heads often resort to authoritarian methods, suppressing disagreements without addressing their underlying causes. This not only perpetuates workplace tension but also stifles employee innovation, collaboration, and trust, core elements required for optimal performance.



This study focuses on the ongoing decline in employee performance at the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Enugu, which is largely attributed to inadequate conflict management practices, especially the limited application of collaboration and negotiation strategies. The research aims to explore how the use of these strategies affects critical performance metrics, including task completion, employee dedication, timeliness, and cooperation across departments.

LITERATURE

Conflict Management

Conceptually, conflict management refers to the deliberate and structured approaches used by individuals or organizations to minimize the harmful effects of conflict while promoting its potential benefits. It encompasses a variety of actions such as preventing disputes, intervening early, mediating disagreements, resolving issues, and fostering reconciliation after conflict. These processes are shaped by leadership styles, organizational policies, and the prevailing communication norms within the workplace (Hellriegel et al., 2014). Depending on the situation and organizational structure, conflict management may take formal or informal forms.

Within public sector organizations such as ministries and government agencies, conflict management holds greater importance due to rigid bureaucratic systems, extensive interdepartmental reliance, and often limited avenues for employee expression. In such settings, effectively managing conflict is vital for ensuring openness, accountability, and quality public service delivery. However, many of these institutions lack formalized conflict resolution mechanisms and often rely on informal or hierarchical approaches that rarely address the underlying issues (Adeyemi and Olagunju, 2020).

Theoretical Analysis

The Dual Concern Theory, developed by Pruitt and Rubin (1986), posits that individuals manage conflict based on two primary concerns: concern for self (assertiveness) and concern for others (cooperativeness). The theory forms the basis for categorizing conflict management strategies into five distinct styles: avoiding, accommodating, competing, compromising, and collaborating. Among these, the collaborating strategy characterized by high concern for both self and others is considered the most constructive for achieving mutually beneficial outcomes.

Empirical Studies

Mensah and Boateng (2020), in their study titled *Workplace Conflict and Performance Outcomes in Ghanaian Civil Service: The Role of Collaborative Approaches*, explored the influence of collaborative conflict resolution on employee performance in three regional offices of the Ghana Civil Service. Using a mixed-methods research design, the study combined data from 220 survey respondents with in-depth interviews involving 15 administrative officers. The quantitative findings, analyzed through Structural Equation Modeling, revealed a significant positive association between the use of the collaborating conflict resolution style and key performance indicators such as punctuality, innovation, and interdepartmental collaboration.



Adeniran and Olatunde (2021) conducted a study on negotiation as a conflict management tool and employee productivity in Selected Federal Ministries in Lagos State, Nigeria. The researchers aimed to examine how negotiation, as a deliberate and structured strategy, influences employee productivity in the public service. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, with data collected from 200 staff members across five ministries using standardized Likert-scale questionnaires. The analysis was carried out using multiple regression and ANOVA techniques. The study found that the use of negotiation significantly enhanced employee performance indicators such as goal clarity, work timeliness, and responsiveness to managerial directives.

In a study titled conflict resolution through Negotiation and its impact on organizational efficiency: Evidence from Public Sector Agencies in Rivers State,” Chikere and Amadi (2020) explored the role of negotiation in mitigating workplace disputes and enhancing employee performance. The study employed a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods approach, combining in-depth interviews with selected administrative officers and survey data from 120 civil servants across three government agencies. The findings revealed that when conflicts were addressed through negotiation especially involving open dialogue and interest-based bargaining employees felt more empowered and cooperative.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design adopted for this study is a survey research design, which is suitable for gathering data from a large population in a structured and systematic manner. This design integrates both descriptive and quantitative approaches, allowing the researcher to obtain detailed insights into existing conditions while also measuring relationships between variables. The use of this mixed approach enhances the reliability and validity of the findings by providing both statistical evidence and contextual understanding of conflict management and employee performance within the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Enugu.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of the staff of Federal Ministry of Agriculture Enugu State; Nigeria. Their number is three hundred and seventy-one. Their details were shown in table 3.1

Ministry	Staff Size
Federal Ministry of Agriculture Enugu	371

Source: *Field Survey, 2025.*

Sample Size Determination

The Taro Yamane sample size determination was utilized. To determine the sample size from a population of 371 staff using Taro Yamane’s formula, the formula is:



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

n = sample size

N = population size (371)

e = margin of error (commonly 0.05 for 95% confidence level)

$$n = \frac{371}{1 + 371(0.05)^2} = \frac{371}{1 + 371(0.0025)} = \frac{371}{1 + 0.9275} = \frac{371}{1.9275} \approx 192.5$$

= 193 respondents (rounded up).

Instrument of the Study

The instrument used for data collection in this study is a simple structured questionnaire, carefully designed to address the key issues outlined in the study objectives and research questions. The questionnaire is comprehensive in scope yet presented in a clear and straightforward manner to ensure ease of understanding and accurate responses from participants. To capture respondents' perceptions effectively, the questionnaire employs the semantic differential method, using a five-point response scale that includes: Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. This format enables the collection of quantifiable data while allowing respondents to express varying degrees of agreement or disagreement with each item.

Validity of the Research Instrument.

Validity refers to the extent that the instrument measures what it was designed to measure. The instrument is validated at two stages; first, by giving the instrument to an expert in the field under study to evaluate. Second, the instrument was submitted to the research supervisor for vetting. This stage also caused more questions to be dropped from the draft. The final document was considered good for the respondents and also good to capture the purpose and objectives of the study.

Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability refers to the extent that the instrument yields the same results over multiple trials. Reliability was assessed with the test-retest method by administering 10 copies of the instrument to 10 employees of Federal Ministry of Agriculture Enugu, and correlation the result using study Cronbach Alpha approach to test the reliability of the study instrument. This approach yielded an index of 0.82 which implies that the instrument was reliable to the tune of 82%.



Method of Data Analysis

The data obtained from the completed questionnaires were carefully coded, arranged, and analyzed using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive analysis involved the use of simple percentages to present and interpret the distribution of responses for each questionnaire item. To test the study's hypotheses, the sample proportion Z-test was employed. This inferential method is suitable for determining whether the proportion of observed responses in the sample significantly deviates from a predetermined population proportion as stated in the null hypothesis.

The formula for the Z-test for sample proportion is:

$$Z = \frac{\hat{p} - p_0}{\sqrt{\frac{p_0(1-p_0)}{n}}}$$

Where:

$\hat{p}$ = observed sample proportion

p_0 = hypothesized population proportion

n = sample size

Z = calculated Z-value

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hypotheses Testing

H₀₁: The collaborating strategy of conflict management has no significant effect on employee performance in the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Enugu.

Proportion of positive responses (SA + A):

$$\hat{p} = 61\% + 32\% = 93\% = 0.93$$

Sample size $n = 193$ (as previously calculated using Taro Yamane)

Hypothesized population proportion:

$$p_0 = 0.5$$



Applying the Z-Test Formula:

$$Z = \frac{\hat{p} - p_0}{\sqrt{\frac{p_0(1-p_0)}{n}}}$$

Substituting values:

$$Z = \frac{0.93 - 0.5}{\sqrt{\frac{0.5(1-0.5)}{193}}} = \frac{0.43}{\sqrt{\frac{0.25}{193}}} = \frac{0.43}{\sqrt{0.001295}} = \frac{0.43}{0.03599} \approx 11.95$$

Decision Rule:

At a 5% significance level, the critical Z-value for a one-tailed test is 1.645

Since $11.95 > 1.645$, we reject the null hypothesis

The result of the Z-test ($Z = 11.95$) shows that the collaborating strategy has a statistically significant positive effect on employee performance in the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Enugu. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

H₀₂: The negotiation strategy of conflict management has no significant effect on employee performance in the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Enugu.

$$\text{Positive responses (SA + A)} = 58\% + 29\% = 87\% = 0.87$$

$$\text{Sample size } n = 193$$

$$\text{Hypothesized population proportion: } p_0 = 0.5$$

Applying the Z-Test Formula:

$$Z = \frac{\hat{p} - p_0}{\sqrt{\frac{p_0(1-p_0)}{n}}}$$

Substitute values:

$$Z = \frac{0.87 - 0.5}{\sqrt{\frac{0.5(1-0.5)}{193}}} = \frac{0.37}{\sqrt{\frac{0.25}{193}}} = \frac{0.37}{\sqrt{0.001295}} = \frac{0.37}{0.03599} \approx 10.28$$



Decision Rule:

At 5% significance level (one-tailed test), critical Z-value = 1.645

Since $10.28 > 1.645$, we reject the null hypothesis

The Z-test result ($Z = 10.28$) indicates that the negotiation strategy has a statistically significant positive effect on employee performance in the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Enugu. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings of this study reveal that both the collaborating and negotiation strategies of conflict management significantly enhance employee performance in the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Enugu. This aligns with Rahim (2021) who emphasized that collaborative conflict resolution promotes mutual understanding, which boosts morale and task efficiency. Similarly, Jehn and Bendersky (2020) noted that inclusive and cooperative conflict strategies foster a positive work climate, thereby improving job outcomes.

The strong support for the negotiation strategy is also consistent with Fisher, Ury, and Patton (2020), who argue that structured negotiation reduces workplace tension and encourages commitment to shared goals. Additionally, Adeniran and Olatunde (2021) found that public service institutions that adopt negotiation as a conflict resolution tool report higher productivity and improved employee satisfaction.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

1. The study found that the collaborating strategy of conflict management has a significant positive effect on employee performance. Staff who experienced mutual dialogue and shared decision-making reported higher levels of efficiency, teamwork, and job satisfaction, confirming the value of collaborative approaches in enhancing productivity.
2. The negotiation strategy was also shown to significantly improve employee performance. Respondents indicated that when conflicts are resolved through open dialogue and compromise, it leads to better cooperation, goal clarity, and overall organizational harmony.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between conflict management and employee performance in the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Enugu, with a focus on the collaborating and negotiation strategies. The findings revealed that both strategies significantly enhance employee performance by promoting cooperation, mutual respect, and constructive dialogue. The majority of staff affirmed that when conflicts are managed through inclusive and participatory methods, it leads to improved job efficiency, teamwork, and commitment to organizational



goals. Therefore, effective conflict management is essential for fostering a productive and harmonious work environment in the ministry. The study concludes that adopting structured and people-centered conflict resolution approaches can greatly enhance institutional performance in Nigeria's public sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Federal Ministry of Agriculture in Enugu is encouraged to officially incorporate the collaborating strategy into its management framework by conducting regular training workshops focused on mutual problem-solving, transparent communication, and participatory decision-making. This approach will help enhance employee performance and boost overall staff morale.
2. Management should establish clear procedures for negotiation in resolving workplace disputes, including designated mediation officers or conflict resolution committees. This will ensure that disagreements are addressed promptly and fairly, thereby enhancing cooperation, trust, and overall employee productivity.

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