

Evaluating Conflict Management Strategies and Industrial Harmony in Banking Organisation: A Study of United Bank for Africa, Lafia Branch Nigeria

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Abstract

Circumstances that involve conflict have an influence on the overall effectiveness of organizations because they disturb the harmony that exists amongst members in the organization. The question that has to be answered, therefore, is what organizations do in their management of conflict in order to attain fair levels of harmony and keep the "applecart" of organizational activity running smoothly. Against this background, therefore, this study is set to evaluate conflict management strategies in the United Bank for Africa, Plc Lafia Branch with a view to determining its impact on industrial harmony. The survey study method was chosen as the design to use in this investigation. For the purpose of this research, 50 members' staffs were purposively chosen and a self-designed questionnaire was administered for the collection of data from the respondents. Results were presented in tables and given as percentages and Pearson's product-moment correlation was used to evaluate the validity of the hypothesis at a significance level of 0.05. Findings revealed that conflict management strategies do have an influence on the level of industrial harmony that may be encountered in corporate and industrial settings. The study therefore concludes that depending on how it is handled, conflict may bring both beneficial and bad results to an organization. Among the recommendation includes that the management of the bank should be responsive enough to objectively put a stop to it by employing appropriate strategies such as compromise, collaboration, and accommodation.

Keywords: Evaluation, conflict management, strategies, industrial harmony, banking, organisation

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is one of the most unforeseeable events that may occur when individuals collaborate in groups, and it is an unavoidable component of the life of an organization due to the fact that the objectives of many stakeholders might be incompatible with one another. Managers in every kind of company spend a significant amount of time trying to resolve disagreements and the problems that arise from them. Ineffective management of conflicts may result in the improper allocation of energy among employees as well as communication problems, both of which can lead to lost opportunities if the conflicts are not addressed [1].

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Therefore, circumstances that involve conflict have an influence on the overall effectiveness of organizations because they disturb the harmony that exists amongst members in the organization. This, in turn, has a negative impact on the performance of the organization. If conflicts are not managed effectively, it will be difficult for a company to fulfil

its objectives. When there is a conflict, individual or group responses might include work sabotage, lower work intensity, overload, and lack of collaboration from frustrated employees who are uncommitted to their job, uninspired, and unproductive. Consequently, circumstances of this kind impede and adversely influence the functioning of the organization [2].

Conflicts in companies have evolved to the point that they are unavoidable, making their management a primary focus of concern. According to Elenwo, for there to be peace in the workplace, both workers and management in the company need to work together harmoniously [3]. According to Adeoti *et al.*, even though conflict within an organization is unavoidable, it should be understood that disagreements between employees and employers need to be managed through mechanisms that are mutually agreed upon to a reasonable level that enables the creativity and performance of employees and the organization as a whole [4].

Badekale *et al.* opined that conflicts in employee-employer interactions are a natural occurrence that cannot be wished away, regardless of whether a company is unionized or non-unionized [5].

The question that has to be answered, therefore, is what organizations do in their management of conflict in order to attain fair levels of harmony and keep the "applecart" of organizational activity running smoothly. The fact that there is more than one kind of conflict and several origins of conflict adds an additional layer of complexity.

They have the potential to lower efficiency, contribute to stress among employees, and have other unfavourable consequences on an organization's overall productivity. Therefore, as a result of the repercussions of conflict management, their resolution may become necessary as soon as it occurs [6]. Against this background, therefore, this study is set to examine conflict management strategies in the United Bank for Africa, Plc with a view to determining its impact on industrial harmony.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The existence of conflicts inside the organization is a normal occurrence that is capable of occurring in any setting in which individuals engage in social interaction with one another [7]. As a result, conflicts are considered to be events that result from problems among individuals or groups within an organization because of working together. These problems are shown to exist when normal activities are disrupted or interrupted as a result of differences in opinions, values, and feelings between individuals or organizations [8]. The process of conflict management involves identifying the conflict and the degree to which it is present, choosing the right ways for intervening in the conflict, evaluating its impacts, and keeping track of the outcomes of those interventions. Similarly, conflict management entails the creation of efficient ways to decrease the non-functioning aspects of the conflict, increase the constructive functions, and maximize the performance of the organization.

Industrial conflicts refer to any dispute or difference that arises between employers or between employers and workmen or between workmen and workmen and that is connected with the employment or non-employment or terms of employment or with the conditions of labour of any person. Industrial conflicts can also arise between workers and employers. In everyday parlance, "industrial disputes" relate almost exclusively to disagreements that arise between employers and the workers they employ. According to Kibe, industrial disputes arise as a result of actions that have been organized against terms of employment that are not complying with current laws that control employment or conditions of work [9].

According to Nzuve and Kiilu, industrial disputes may originate from a variety of backgrounds, including economic, political, social, or socio-economic factors [10]. At the same time, the mentality of both employers and workers is accountable for a significant portion of the problem to a certain degree. Industrial disputes may be caused by a variety of circumstances, some of which are industry-

related, some of which are management-related, some of which are government-related, and some of which are union-related. The most common variables that lead to industrial disputes are disagreements over remuneration and the absence of clearly defined protocols for how to carry out one's responsibilities on the job.

Conflict Management Strategies

According to Nzuve SNM, Kiilu LM (2013) [10], conflict management strategies are concerned with the adoption of effective approaches to undermine the dysfunctional implications of conflict while simultaneously enhancing its functional aspect in order to improve learning and the overall effectiveness of the organization. It is also related with the process by which two sides in a disagreement employ interpersonal communication in order to enable them to arrive to a point of agreement that is amiable and satisfying to both parties. Since conflict was identified as unavoidable phenomena that pervade a variety of organizational processes and results, the management of conflict assumed a position of paramount significance.

Wobodo outlined four strategies for handling disputes [11]. These strategies are as follows: collaboration, accommodation, compromise, and avoidance. In addition, Khan *et al.* provided a list of conflict management strategies, which included dominance, integration, avoiding, compromising, and obliging [12]. On the other hand, Hussein *et al.* utilized five dimensions, which were as follows: avoiding, compromising, forcing, problem solving (cooperation), and accommodating [13]. Others choose to engage in conciliation, negotiation, arbitration, mediation, or partnership during conflict resolution.

Concept of Industrial Harmony

The concept of industrial harmony has been investigated by a number of management researchers, such as Puttapalli and Vuram who have used a wide range of various predictor elements in their investigations [14]. However, the findings of these studies demonstrated that it is impossible for an organization to endure or flourish in the absence of unwavering manifestations of harmonious and peaceful coexistence between the numerous stakeholders. This conclusion was reached as a result of the fact that it is impossible for an organization to endure or flourish without these manifestations. These constituents encompass both the internal and external constituents of the business. Internal constituents include the organization's workers and stockholders. External constituents include the firm's suppliers, distributors, host communities, and regulatory authorities.

Industrial harmony is a phenomenon that has evolved in contemporary business. This may be attributed to the rational character of human beings (workers), in addition to the common perception that they are the most prized asset of the corporation. The amount of dedication and interest that workers have in the organization is directly proportional to the degree to which management prioritizes the needs and interests of its workforce. This is due to the fact that every employee at the office has the dream of being recognized, welcomed, and integrated in every aspect of their professional existence. In a similar spirit, Yusuf-Habeeb and Kazeem claim that in order for individuals to develop in their jobs and other parts of life, there must be collaboration [15]. They state that cooperation is vital to guarantee that tasks are accomplished and that there is stability in life.

When seen from this angle, preserving the peace in the workplace might be construed as the essential element that underpins the achievement of any successful corporate goal. In addition, Puttapalli and Vuram described industrial harmony as being concerned with the mutual interaction between management team and workers in regard to the terms and circumstances of employment at the workplace [14]. This kind of scenario is ideal for both parties involved. And this, in turn, implies that whenever these mutual expectations are breached by either party, industrial relations tend to be strained, ultimately leading to industrial disharmony or conflict and consequently, manifests itself in the form of open hostility, distrust, disrespect, non-cooperation, and avoidance of interaction.

Relationship between Conflict Management and Industrial Harmony

Industrial conflict management, as defined by Yusuf-Habeeb and Kazeem, entails making decisions with the goal of ensuring that industrial harmony is maintained [15]. According to Pearce and Robinson, every business strives to have strong management employee connections [16]. As a result, no organization can successfully survive in the presence of any sort of instability stemming from conflict. As a result, one method for establishing and maintaining such cohesive relationships that drive performance is to make an effort to undermine the emergence of dysfunctional conflict tendencies as much as possible through the adoption of effective strategies for conflict management. Given that conflict is an inherent part of every human endeavour, this is one way to establish and maintain such relationships.

This view is in agreement with that of Snell, who argued that there is no one specific strategy for conflict management that can resolve all instances of industrial conflict; however, the adoption of any strategy should be contingent on the context [17]. Because the way in which issues of interest to individual stakeholders (government, management, students and host community etc.) are handled can either persuade or dissuade total commitment towards shared goals and, in the long run, affect industrial harmony, selecting the appropriate strategy is particularly important. As a result, it is necessary to make a concerted effort to guarantee that the dysfunctional disagreement is addressed without leaving either side feeling unsatisfied.

Empirical review

Sabri *et al.* conducted research on a variety of approaches to the management of organizational conflict [18]. The purpose of this research is to characterize the many kinds of organizational disputes and to determine which kinds of conflicts are beneficial to organizations and which kinds are detrimental to them. It was discovered that increasing an employee's level of satisfaction with the use of style confrontation in the process of resolving personal issues that already existed between them led to an increase in that employee's level of satisfaction with the use of other techniques. The authors Hotepo *et al.* studied the impact that organizational conflict has on the functioning of organizations [19]. In this study, a descriptive research approach is used, and a questionnaire is used to gather data from 96 managers working for various airlines, road transport businesses, and insurance organizations in the Lagos Metropolis area. The researchers Ajike *et al.* used Access Bank Plc as a case study for their investigation on how effective dispute resolution may be for improving employee performance in Nigerian financial institutions [20]. The questionnaires were distributed to a sample size of eighty-one (81) out of the many workers of the bank that are located at the three branches of the bank that are situated in Lagos State. The influence of conflict resolution on employee performance at Access Bank Plc was investigated by means of a descriptive and regression analysis, which was carried out with the assistance of SPSS. According to the findings of the research, there is a significantly favourable correlation between the settlement of workplace conflicts and the performance of workers ($r=0.715$; $p 0.05$). It is thus essential that management establishes a variety of solutions that are not only suitable but also effective in order to manage and resolve conflicts as they emerge in the company before they reach an unmanageable level.

Theoretical Framework

Karl Marx's well-established work is where the concept of conflict theory originated. The underlying issue at hand is the social stratification of the general population. The struggle that took place among various factions of society for valuable resources ultimately resulted in the outbreak of social strife. The competition that occurs inside social gatherings may lead to social strife. As a result, the primary focus of this research is on the resolution of industrial conflicts inside companies and the formulation of recommendations for achieving industrial harmony. The theory of conflict is a useful tool for elucidating the factors that contribute to conflict among competing interests. The purpose of this research was to analyse how industrial agreements might be improved despite the possibility of disagreement within and among trade unions, an area in which strike theory may be lacking.

On the other hand, according to the pluralistic point of view, an organization is seen as being made up of functional and diverse sub-bunches. These sub-bunches include management and exchange unions. This viewpoint accepts as normal and unavoidable the existence of conditions that cannot be reconciled and inconsistencies that exist between supervisors and employees about the distribution of rewards. The idea that labour unions are genuine representatives of their members serves as the driving force behind the pluralistic point of view. The repercussion of this is that union recognition needs to be activated, and union representatives have to be provided extension to finish their duties as agents.

METHODS

Since the purpose of this study was to investigate the connection between effective conflict management and industrial harmony, the survey study method was chosen as the design to use in this investigation. The Lafia Branch of the United Bank of African PLC in Nasarawa State was selected as the focal point of the study so that primary data could be gathered there via the use of questionnaires. The management, senior staff and junior employees of the Lafia Branch of the United Bank of African PLC made up this research's population. For the purpose of this research, 50 members' staffs were purposively chosen to provide accurate and relevant information on the study. A self-designed questionnaire on conflict management and industrial harmony was used and administered for the collection of data from the respondents in United Bank of African PLC Lafia Branch Nasarawa State. Testing, as well as a preliminary testing approach, was used in order to determine the instrument's level of dependability. To establish the reliability of the instrument, a test-retest procedure was carried out after a period of 2 weeks on a representative sample drawn from the pool of respondents. The reliability of the instrument was evaluated with the use of the Cronbach alpha reliability test, and the results showed that the instrument had a reliability coefficient of 0.81. A simple descriptive approach was used for the data analysis, and the results were presented in tables and given as percentages. Inferential statistics, specifically Pearson's product-moment correlation, was used to evaluate the validity of the hypothesis at a significance level of 0.05.

RESULTS

Analysis of Questionnaire distribution

The researcher prepared and distributed 50 questionnaires to the management, permanent staffs, contract staffs and all other personnel of UBA Bank, Lafia Branch.

Table 1 shows that most i.e., 52% of the repondents are within the ages of 18–25 years, 32% are within the ages of 26–35 years and 6% are within 36–45 years and 4% are above 45 years old. Furthermore, 52% of the respondents are males while 48% are females. Also, 8% of the respondents are management staff, 16% are senior staff, 24% are junior staff, 44% are contract staff and 8% are other members of staff.

Table 1. Demographics of respondents.

Demographics	Variable	Frequency N=50	Percentages (%)
Age (years)	18–25	26	52.0
	26–35	16	32.0
	36–45	6	12.0
	Above 45	2	4.0
Gender	Male	26	52.0
	Female	24	48.0
Cadre	Management	4	8.0
	Senior Staff	8	16.0
	Junior Staff	12	24.0
	Contract	22	44.0
	Others	4	8.0

Source: Field survey, 2022.

Research Question 1: What are the causes of conflicts in corporate and industrial environments?

Table 2 reveals that 43 respondents representing 86%, strongly agree that poor communication in getting tasks done leads to conflict. Also, 34 representing 68% of the respondents strongly agreed that misunderstandings regarding policies and practices leads to conflict and 9 representing 18% of the respondents agreed. However, 5 representing 10% of the respondents disagreed that misunderstanding regarding policies and practices leads to conflict, while 2 representing 4% strongly disagreed. Furthermore, 26 respondents representing 52% strongly agreed that personal differences often lead to industrial conflict and 13 representing 26% agreed while 11 representing 22% disagreed that personal differences often lead to industrial conflict. The results further showed that 31 respondents representing 62% strongly agreed that corporate conflict often arises due to issues relating to compensation and conditions for work while 11 representing 22% agreed and 8 representing 16% disagreed that corporate conflict often arises due to issues relating to compensation and conditions for work. In addition, 35 representing 70% strongly agreed that unfair treatment of employees leads to corporate conflict and 13 representing 26% agreed while 2 representing (4%) disagreed.

Table 2. Causes of conflicts in corporate and industrial environments.

Statement	SA	A	D	SD
Poor communication in getting tasks done leads to conflict	43(86%)	7(14%)		
Misunderstandings regarding policies and practices leads to conflict	34(68%)	9(18%)	5(10%)	2(4%)
Personal differences often lead to industrial conflict	26(52%)	13(26%)	11(22%)	
Corporate conflict often arises due to issues relating to compensation and conditions for work	31(62%)	11(22%)	8(16%)	
Unfair treatment of employees leads to corporate conflicts	35(70%)	13(26%)	2(4%)	

Source: Field survey, 2022.

SA: Strongly Agreed,

A: Agreed,

D: Disagreed, and

SD: Strongly Disagreed.

Research Question 2: What are the different strategies of conflict management in corporate and industrial environments?

Table 3 reveals that 36 respondents representing 72% strongly agree that managers need to understand the situation surrounding a conflict before taking action, while 8 representing 16% agreed and 3 representing 6% disagreed that managers need to understand the situation surrounding a conflict before taking action while 3 representing 6% strongly disagreed.

Also, 31 representing 62% of the respondents strongly agreed that the use of coercion and intimidation should be avoided in conflicts and 13 representing 26% of the respondents agreed. However, 6 representing 12% of the respondents disagreed that the use of coercion and intimidation should be avoided in conflicts while 5 representing 10% strongly disagreed. The results further revealed that 20 representing 40% of the respondents strongly agreed that in conflict situations, managers should focus on the problem not the individual and 13 representing 26% agreed while 11 representing 22% disagreed that in conflict situations, managers should focus on the problem not the individual and 6 representing 12% strongly disagreed. Furthermore, 32 representing 64% strongly agreed that communication channels should be kept open at all times in conflict situations and 13 representing 26% agreed while 5 representing 10% disagreed that communication channels should be kept open at all times in conflict situations. In addition, 30 representing 60% of the respondents strongly agreed that corporate managers should be proactive in avoiding conflict and 2 representing 4% agreed while 10 representing 20% disagreed that corporate managers should be proactive in avoiding conflict and 8 representing 16% strongly disagreed.

Table 3. The different strategies of conflict management in corporate and industrial environments.

Statement	SA	A	D	SD
Managers need to understand the situation surrounding a conflict before taking action	36 (72%)	8 (16%)	3 (6%)	3 (6%)
The use of coercion and intimidation should be avoided in conflicts	31 (62%)	13 (26%)	6 (12%)	5 (3.4%)
In conflict situations, managers should focus on the problem not the individual.	20 (40%)	13 (26%)	11 (22%)	6 (12%)
Communication channels should be kept open at all times in conflict situations	32 (64%)	13 (26%)	5 (10%)	
Corporate managers should be proactive in avoiding conflict	30 (60%)	2 (4%)	10 (20%)	8 (16%)

SA: Strongly Agreed,
 A: Agreed,
 D: Disagreed, and
 SD: Strongly Disagreed.

Research Question 3: What is the impact of effective conflict management on Industrial harmony?

Table 4 reveals that 35 respondents representing (70%) strongly agreed that early corporate conflict management can shine a light on deeper problems that need to be addressed, while 9 representing 18% agreed and 4 representing 8% disagreed that early corporate conflict management can shine a light on deeper problems that need to be addressed while 2 representing 4% strongly disagreed.

Also, 31 representing 62% of the respondents strongly agreed that effective conflict management promotes healthy relationships and 13 representing 26% of the respondents agreed. However, 11 representing 22% of the respondents disagreed that effective conflict management promotes healthy relationships while 5 representing 10% strongly disagreed.

Table 4. The impact of effective conflict management on industrial harmony.

Statement	SA	A	D	SD
Early corporate conflict management can shine a light on deeper problems that need to be addressed	35(70%)	9(18%)	4(8.0%)	2(4%)
Effective conflict management promotes healthy relationships	31(62%)	13(26%)	6(12%)	
Effective conflict management boosts workplace Morale	20(40%)	13(26%)	11(22%)	6(12%)
Effective conflict management enhances commitment to work	32(64%)	13(26%)	5(10%)	
Effective conflict management leads to employee personal growth and insight	30(60%)	2(4%)	10(20%)	8(16%)

Source: Field survey, 2022.
 SA: Strongly Agreed,
 A: Agreed,
 D: Disagreed, and
 SD: Strongly Disagreed.

Furthermore, 20 representing 40% of the respondents strongly agreed that effective conflict management boosts workplace morale and 13 representing 26% of the respondents agreed. However, 11 representing 22% of the respondents disagreed that effective conflict management boosts workplace morale while 6 representing 12% strongly disagreed. The results further revealed that 32 representing 64% of the respondents strongly agreed that effective conflict management enhances commitment to work and 13 representing 26% of the respondents agreed while 5 representing 10% of the respondents disagreed that effective conflict management enhances commitment to work. Also, 30 representing 60%

of the respondents strongly agreed that effective conflict management leads to employee's personal growth and insight and 2 representing 4% of the respondents agreed while 10 representing 20% of the respondents disagreed that effective conflict management leads to employee's personal growth and insight and 8 representing 16% strongly disagreed.

Test of Hypothesis

H₀: Conflict management strategies are not effective in corporate and industrial harmony.

Table 5. Model summary.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.777 ^a	.604	.598	.25188

a. Predictors: (Constant), Conflict management strategies

Measurement of strength of association (Table 5): the independent variable (conflict management strategies) affects the dependent variable (conflict in corporate and industrial harmony) by 60.4% (Table 6).

Table 6. ANOVA^a.

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	18.960	3	6.320	99.615	.000 ^b
	Residual	12.435	196	.063		
	Total	31.395	199			

a. Dependent Variable: Conflict in corporate and industrial environments
b. Predictors: (Constant), Conflict management strategies

Decision Rule

The P. sig value of 0.000(p<0.05) signifies that conflict management strategies have no effect on conflict in corporate and industrial environments. Because the P-value is lesser than 5% of level of significance (that is 0.000%<0.05%), we therefore reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis, therefore conflict management strategies have an effect on corporate and industrial harmony.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

According to the findings of the research, conflict management systems do have an influence on the level of industrial harmony that may be encountered in corporate and industrial settings. This finding is in keeping with the research conducted by Shabani *et al.*, who found that although while conflict is unavoidable in the workplace, the manner in which it is handled affects whether or not it will have a good or negative influence on the performance of the business [1]. This is also in accordance with Lvovich *et al.* [21], who state that conflicts should be managed with care. All of this can be accomplished by determining the factors that lead to conflicts, adopting measures to avoid and resolve disputes, and increasing the quality of conflict management. For successful conflict management in the workplace, prompt identification of the dispute and timely explanation of the issue's origins before the conflict spirals out of control are key the level of production in the majority of firms has been inhibited in comparison as a result of the prevalence of industrial conflict. Happy people have more positive interactions, which in turn boosts morale and increases work satisfaction. Confusion, concern, stress, and ambiguity are all caused by unhealthy relationships, and all of these things have a detrimental influence on a worker's ability to do their job efficiently and productively.

CONCLUSION

The results of this research led the researchers to the conclusion that no organization, public or private, is immune to the occurrence of conflict tendencies. Because of this, conflict may be seen as an

inevitable and unavoidable aspect of human interaction. Depending on how it is handled, conflict may bring both beneficial and bad results to an organization. When a company encourages healthy competition among its employees, it opens the door to a wide range of perspectives, which in turn stimulates innovation and creativity. Also, when conflict is handled well, it helps to foster industrial harmony among the members of the organization; as a result, everyone's voice, opinion, or demand is taken into consideration, and this may happen either on the basis of compromise, cooperation, or accommodation, depending on the nature of the dispute.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions, this study recommends that:

- Managers should place a higher emphasis on relationships, steer clear of conflicts in favour of maintaining peace, and find ways to lessen conflict so as not to damage existing interpersonal bonds.
- In the event of any conflict situation, the management of the bank should be responsive enough to objectively put a stop to it by employing appropriate strategies such as compromise, collaboration, and accommodation. This will prevent the organization from becoming a breeding ground for a variety of deviant workplace behaviours such as sabotage and alienations as a result of disharmony.
- The management should make an effort to hold seminars or workshops on organizational conflict management for the staff on a regular basis. These should be done on a regular basis. Employees will be able to learn about conflict and how it can be effectively managed for increased individual and organizational effectiveness.

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