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CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND ORGANISATIONAL HARMONY OF FIRST BANK PLC, AWKA, ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA.

CHUKWUJAMA, NGOZI COMFORT [1]
ngo4real1190@yahoo.com

IHIM, MAUREEN CHINENYE [2]
maureenihim23@gmail.com

ONWUEMEKA, IRENE OLANMA [3]
ireneolanma2181@yahoo.com

Abstract
This study focused on conflict resolution and organizational harmony in selected branches of First Bank of Nigeria, in Awka, Anambra. The specific objectives were focused on the relationship between avoidance strategy and job satisfaction among the employees; secondly, between compromise strategy and goal attainment in the selected branches of First Bank of Nigeria, in Awka, Anambra. The study was anchored on Contingency Theory by Fiedler. The study adopted survey research design and simple random sampling technique was used to select the branches of first banks in Awka, Anambra State. The population of the study is 189 and Taro Yamane formula was used to determine the sample size of 128. Data were collected with the aid of structured questionnaire. The data generated were analyzed using Descriptive Statistics (Arithmetic Mean) and hypothesis one was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient while hypotheses 2 was tested using on Statistical packages for Social Science (version 21) at 5% level of significance. Findings revealed that there is positive relationship between conflict resolution and organizational harmony in selected branches of First Bank Plc, Awka, Anambra State by indicating that there is positive relationship between avoidance strategy and job satisfaction; secondly, between compromise strategy and goal attainment; The study recommended that management should be adopt emotional intelligence practices such as social skills, self-awareness and social awareness to have adequate knowledge of

the personalities within an organization to always adopt conflict avoidance strategy. This will guarantee peaceful work place and high job satisfaction There is need to adopt a system of compromise through sensitization of staff as it will give them the right job behaviour towards attainment of organisational goals.

Keywords: Conflict, Organisation, Avoidance, Compromise.

INTRODUCTION

In every aspect of human society and endeavor, conflict is seen as a natural phenomenon that is, inevitable as long as human relationships are involved. It is a process that begins when one party perceives that another party has been negatively affected or is about to be negatively affected about something that the first party cares about (Leana & Rouseau, 2020). As a result of people interacting with each other, friction, disagreements or arguments may arise resulting from actual or perceived differences or incompatibilities, thereby escalating to conflict.

When conflict is well resolved, it can bring enormous benefits to people and organizations as conflict resolution is often one of the biggest drivers of change in any organizational set up. If properly handled, it can create stronger bonds, help people to be more innovative, build effective teams, establish strong working relationship and eventually improve individual as well as organizational harmony. The key is to openly face an issue and negotiate a win-win outcome from those parties involved (Garcia, 2013).

First Bank of Nigeria Limited, is a Nigerian multinational and financial services company headquartered in Lagos, Nigeria. The organization is often faced with the issue of employee welfare. Employee welfare is an important source of motivation to employees and the lack of it has led to employees having grievances against management which has most times resulted into conflict between both parties and the resulting effect has affected not only the

performance of the employees but the organization. Resolving the organizational conflict became necessary so as to improve its harmony.

Conflict resolution involves doing things to limit the negative aspects of conflict and to increase the positive aspects of conflict with the aim of enhancing learning and group outcomes, including effectiveness or harmony in organizational settings (Rahim, 2011). Conflict resolution is something that managers need to deal with as conflict significantly affects employee morale and turnover, which affects the prosperity of an organization, either constructively or destructively. Therefore, the effectiveness or otherwise of the resolution of conflict is largely dependent on how well the causes of the conflict have been understood. Leana & Rouseau (2020) identified five major strategies for resolving conflict in organizations based on assertiveness and cooperativeness which, according to Adeyemi & Ademilua as cited in Lazarus (2020), are the internal mechanisms used by the various authorities in resolving conflict. Assertiveness means the degree to which one party attempts to satisfy his or her own concerns while cooperativeness means the degree to which one party attempts to satisfy the other party's concerns. They include collaboration, compromise, accommodation, competition/domination and avoidance. In the context of this work, collaboration and compromise strategies will be considered. This is because the two conflict resolution strategies provide a satisfactory balance for both parties involved in conflict in terms of assertiveness and cooperativeness. The accommodation and domination strategies will not be considered in the study because they do not provide satisfactory balance to the parties involved in conflict. This is because it leads to one party benefiting at the expense of the other.

Organisational harmony is concerned with the mutual relationship between management team and employees in relation to the terms and conditions of employment at the workplace. It is a situation where there is healthy and cooperative working relationship between employers and employees (Puttapalli and Vuram (2020). And as such, implies that

whenever these mutual expectations are breached by either parties, industrial relations tend to be strained, ending up in industrial disharmony or conflict (Bankole, 2019); and consequently, manifests in the form of open hostility, distrust, disrespect, non-cooperation and avoidance of interaction (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2013).

However, improved organisational harmony is dependent on the appropriate conflict resolution strategy(s) such as, collaboration strategy and compromise strategy adopted by the organisation in resolving conflict. Applying the appropriate strategy will improve employees' performance resulting to an improved organisational harmony. On the other hand, the inability of the organisation to apply the appropriate conflict resolution strategy(s) will lead to a decline in employee's performance which in turn will result in a decline in organisational harmony.

Statement of the Problem

Managers spend approximately twenty percent of their time dealing with conflict situations due to the growing complexity of organisations, use of teams and group decision making, and globalization (Mullins, 2019). This demonstrated the impossibility of completely eliminating conflict within an organization because conflict will always arise when people are interacting, regardless of the level of interaction. The manner disputes are settled, nevertheless, matters in order to prevent them from happening again.

First Bank of Nigeria's Awka-Aroma Branch, Unizik Branch, Nimo Branch, and Ekwulobia Branch are among the branches in Awka, Anambra, where there is a disagreement that has to be addressed. These branches negotiate personnel bonuses, which typically happen at the end of the year. The lingering problem leads to conflict between the organization's management and workers, which takes the form of workers lodging complaints against management, altering their behavior or attitude, putting in less effort at work, getting into physical altercations with each other, and stopping production because workers won't work.

This had an impact on each employee's productivity and effectiveness as well as the organization's overall success. Management's attempts to settle the dispute have only succeeded in stifling it. This is a result of the management using a dominance approach that benefits them at the expense of the workers. First Bank of Nigeria, Awka must therefore come up with a practical plan for settling the internal dispute.

Since conflict is inevitable in an organisation, its management will determine whether it will generate positive or negative effect on organisational harmony (Uchendu, Anijaobi & Odigwe, 2013). Therefore, this study seeks to examine the Conflict Resolution using collaboration strategy and compromise strategy and on organisational harmony of First Bank of Nigeria, Awka.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine Conflict Resolution and Organisational Harmony on selected branches of First Bank of Nigeria, in Awka, Anambra. The specific objectives are to:

i. Examine the relationship of avoidance strategy and job satisfaction in the selected branches of First Bank of Nigeria, in Awka, Anambra.

ii. Ascertain the relationship between compromise strategy and goal attainment in First Bank of Nigeria, in Awka, Anambra.

Research Hypotheses.

In line with the research objectives of the study, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H_{01}: Avoidance strategy has no significant relationship with job satisfaction in the performance of First Bank of Nigeria, Awka.

H_{02}: Compromise strategy has no significant relationship with goal attainment in the performance of First Bank of Nigerian, Awka.

Research Questions.

The specific research questions to be addressed in this study include:

1. What is the relationship between avoidance strategy and job satisfaction in the performance of First Bank of Nigeria, Awka?
2. What is the relationship between compromise strategy and goal attainment in the performance of First Bank of Nigeria, Awka?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.

Conceptual Framework

Concept of Conflict

Every organization encounters conflicts on a daily basis. The conflict cannot be avoided, but it is possible to manage them in a way that we recognize them on time. It is necessary to continuously track the organizational signals which point to their existence. If we do not react duly, this can lead to the situation that the conflict itself manages the organization. Conflict can be referred to as the process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected something that the first party cares about (Thomasas cited in Kondalkar, 2007), which indicates that conflict must be perceived by either of the parties. In the same vein, Robbins et *al.* (2012) views conflict as a process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected or is about to negatively affect something that the first party cares about.

Concept of Conflict Resolution

Conflict Resolution is the process of limiting the negative aspects of conflict while increasing the positive aspects of conflict. The aim is to enhance learning and group outcomes, including effectiveness or performance in an organizational setting. Properly resolved conflict increases organizational harmony by increasing the number of questions asked and encourages people to challenge the status quo (Adeyemi and Ademilua ,2020).

Avoidance Strategy

A person may recognize that a conflict exists and wants to withdraw from it or suppress it (Ezeanyim, 2010). It is also known as the withdrawing style and in this style, assertiveness and cooperativeness are low, that is, neither of the parties considers their interest in the management of conflict. People who fear conflict use the avoiding style to escape from conflict situations.

Compromise Strategy

It is a traditional method for resolving intergroup conflicts and it is also referred to as the middle of the road approach. Anyanwu (2020) opines that when each party to the conflict seeks to give up something, sharing occurs, resulting in a compromised outcome, as such there is no clear winner or loser. Rather, there is a willingness to ration the object of the conflict and accept a solution that provides incomplete satisfaction of both parties' concerns. The distinguishing characteristic of compromising therefore is that each party intends to give up something. Victor as cited in Violetta (2012), sees it as a "give-and-take" approach with moderate levels of both assertiveness and cooperativeness. Compromise can be identified as bargaining or trading. This strategy is typically used to balance the needs of both or all sides in a conflict by encouraging everyone to give in on at least some points. This style of conflict can be more time consuming and requires more people skills than other conflict resolution techniques.

Concept of Organisational Harmony

rthermore, Puttapalli and Vuram (2012) defined industrial harmony as being concerned with the mutual relationship between management team and employees in relation to the terms and conditions of employment at the workplace. It is a situation where there is healthy and cooperative working relationship between employers and employees. And

as such, implies that whenever these mutual expectations are breached by either parties, industrial relations tend to be strained, ending up in industrial disharmony or conflict rthermore, Puttapalli and Vuram (2012) defined industrial harmony as being concerned with the mutual relationship between management team and employees in relation to the terms and conditions of employment at the workplace. It is a situation where there is healthy and cooperative working relationship between employers and employees. And as such, implies that whenever these mutual expectations are breached by either parties, industrial relations tend to be strained, ending up in industrial disharmony or conflict rthermore, Puttapalli and Vuram (2012) defined industrial harmony as being concerned with the mutual relationship between management team and employees in relation to the terms and conditions of employment at the workplace. It is a situation where there is healthy and cooperative working relationship between employers and employees. And as such, implies that whenever these mutual expectations are breached by either parties, industrial relations tend to be strained, ending up in industrial disharmony or conflict rthermore, Puttapalli and Vuram (2012) defined industrial harmony as being concerned with the mutual relationship between management team and employees in relation to the terms and conditions of employment at the workplace. It is a situation where there is healthy and cooperative working relationship between employers and employees. And as such, implies that whenever these mutual expectations are breached by either parties, industrial relations tend to be strained, ending up in industrial disharmony or conflict rthermore, Puttapalli and Vuram (2012) defined industrial harmony as being concerned with the mutual relationship between management team and employees in relation to the terms and conditions of employment at the workplace. It is a situation where there is healthy and cooperative working relationship between employers and employees. And as such, implies that whenever these mutual expectations are breached by either parties, industrial relations tend to be strained, ending up in industrial disharmony or conflict. Organisational harmony is concerned with the mutual relationship between management

team and employees in relation to the terms and conditions of employment at the workplace. It is a situation where there is healthy and cooperative working relationship between employers and employees (Puttapalli and Vuram (2020). And as such, implies that whenever these mutual expectations are breached by either parties, industrial relations tend to be strained, ending up in industrial disharmony or conflict (Bankole, 2019); and consequently, manifests in the form of open hostility, distrust, disrespect, non-cooperation and avoidance of interaction (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2013). For the purpose of this study, the measurement proposed by the author was the measurement of the dependent variable. These variables include: Work Relationship and Goal Attainment.

Job Satisfaction.

Job or work is an important aspect of an individual's life and it occupies a lot of personal and professional time compared to any other activity. Satisfaction is the pleasure felt after a need is fulfilled. One would suppose a person is satisfied when his or her expectations or desires or requirements have been met. Job satisfaction describes how much extent an individual is pleased, comfortable or satisfied with his or her job. It is a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences. In current organisations Job Satisfaction is a crucial subject of attention which is very considered by the higher authorities, policy makers and top executives because this issue is related to many other significant and important issues of organisations. Employees are the core assets and key part of any organisations by which all means of production are handled. As a human being this is human nature that employees are satisfied or dissatisfied what work they are assigned. This is the prime objective of the organizations that they should make and implement such type of policies that can make an employee to satisfy with his/her job which is assigned to them. It is clear from previous studies that how Job Satisfaction is important for any organisations. It is very important issue nowadays when organizations are facing with many types of employee related problems and challenges i.e.

organizational performance, organizational commitment, employee turnover, employee productivity etc.

Goal Attainment.

An organization's effectiveness should be judged by whether it has achieved what it sets out to achieve (its organizational goals). Examples of organizational goals are: achieving certain quality outcomes, achieving certain profit objectives, increasing market share. Consequently, successful goal accomplishment can be considered an appropriate measure of effectiveness. But the use of goals implies additional assumptions that must be valid if goal attainment is to be a viable measure of effectiveness. These assumptions are: organizations must have goals; the goals must be explicit, adequately clear, and widely known. There should be a manageable number of goals which reflect areas important to the organization (thus, organizations cannot set to achieve too many goals) and progress towards goals must be measurable and there should be a time limit attached to them. rthermore, Puttapalli and Vuram (2012) defined industrial harmony as being concerned with the mutual relationship between management team and employees in relation to the terms and conditions of employment at the workplace. It is a situation where there is healthy and cooperative working relationship between employers and employees. And as such, implies that whenever these mutual expectations are breached by either parties, industrial relations tend to be strained, ending up in industrial disharmony or Conflict oganization because rather than enthrone peaceful and harmonious work relationship between employers and employees, it strains it. Hence, strikes could lead to temporary gains for the aggrieved, while the Puttapalli and Vuram (2012) defined industrial harmony as being concerned with the mutual relationship between management team and employees in relation to the terms and conditions of employment at the workplace. It is a situation where there is healthy and cooperative working

relationship between employers and employees. And as such, implies that whenever these mutual expectations are breached by either parties, industrial relations tend to be strained, ending up in industrial disharmony or conflict (Bankole, 2000); and c Puttapalli and Vuram (2012) defined industrial harmony as being concerned with the mutual relationship between management team and employees in relation to the terms and conditions of employment at the workplace. It is a situation where there is healthy and cooperative working relationship between employers and employees. And as such, implies that whenever these mutual expectations are breached by either parties, industrial relations tend to be strained, ending up in industrial disharmony or conflict (Bankole, 2000).

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Contingency Theory. This theory is a behavioral theory developed by Fred Fiedler in 1964.The assumption of the theory is that there is no universal or one best way to manage an organisation and that an organisational/leadership style that is effective in some situations may not be successful in others. The theory argued that a manager's effectiveness is based upon the interplay of task, or relation, motivation and the circumstance. In other words, certain circumstances require different management approaches with a focus either on motivating for task completion or maintaining harmonious group relations.

The decision to base the study on this theory was informed by the fact that there is no one best strategy in resolving organisational conflict. A strategy is considered appropriate for a conflict situation if its use leads to effective formulation and/or solution to a problem (Rahim, 2011).

Empirical Review

Awan and Saeed (2015) conducted a study to examine the causes of conflict as well as the possible solution to improve working environment (organisational performance) in Askari Bank Limited, Pakistan. The study adopted survey method using descriptive techniques such as frequency, percentages, mean, standard deviation, variance and factor analysis to analyze the data. The findings of the study revealed that conflict stems from incompatibility of goals and interest and that there is no significant difference between the opinion of male and female respondents regarding the causes of conflict. The study concluded that there is a significant effect of conflict on organisational performance. The study recommended that management must adopt conflict management strategies that improve organisational performance and also promote interpersonal relationships among co-workers to boost their morale. The study only identified the strategies used by the organisation in managing conflict.

Longe (2015) investigated the impact of workforce conflict resolution on organisational harmony in selected Nigerian manufacturing firm, using 250 employees selected through stratified random sampling techniques and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The result showed that there is significant positive relationship between integrated conflict management strategies (collective bargaining, compromise and accommodation) and organisational performance, while non-integrated conflict management strategies (competition, domination and avoidance) had a negative statistical determinate effect on organisational performance. The study did not consider the effect of collaboration strategy on organisational performance

Oparanma, Hamilton and Ohaka (2009) conducted an investigation on managerial strategies to conflict management of not for-profit organisations in Port Harcourt. The study adopted the descriptive study pattern with the use of questionnaire and personal interview. A total of 80 copies of questionnaire were distributed to both the junior and

senior staff. The investigation found that there was a significant positive relationship between conflict management and organisational performance and it was concluded that conflicts in non-profit making organisations can be resolved where administrators indulge in collective bargaining agreement, understanding of employees and acceptance of subordinate goals.

Gap in Knowledge

Mba (2013), Longe (2015), and Awan and Saeed (2015) all carried out a studies relating to conflict resolution and its relationship with Organisational harmony, however none of these researchers carried out works on Conflict Resolution and Organisational Harmony in First Bank PLC, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria. This creates a gap which the researcher intends to fill.

The Researcher fills the gap by studying Conflict Resolution and Organisational Harmony in First Bank PLC, Awka, Anambra state, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Descriptive Survey Research Design was adopted in this study because the study aimed to adopt a system that will support the direct collation of data from respondents. Since descriptive survey research design is one of the research design that supports the collation of data via primary approach such as the use of questionnaire, observation or interview method.

Population Study

In this study, the target population comprised employees from selected branches of First Bank of Nigeria, in Awka Anambra State. The combined number of staff from the selected branches of First Bank is 189.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The study adopted the use of the Taro Yamane Formula (Yamane,1967 quoted by Botes, 2009; Alugbuo, 2005) to determine the sample size with a confidence level of 95%.

The formula was applied thus:

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

Where n = sample size

N = Population (189)

e = tolerable error (100% - 95% = 5)

Therefore,

$$n = \frac{189}{1 + 189(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{189}{1 + 189(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{189}{1.473}$$

n = 128

Sample size for this study is 128

Method of Data Collection

For this study, primary and secondary sources of data were used. The Primary data was sourced from a well-structured questionnaire to be distributed to employees of the selected branches in the study. The structured questionnaire was used to collect information concerning the variables of the study. The structured questionnaire is divided into two sections. The Secondary Data which was used in the form of literature review, were sourced through textbooks, Magazines and journals.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were presented using simple frequency and percentage tables. The data generated were analyzed using Descriptive Statistics (Arithmetic Mean) and hypothesis one was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient while hypotheses 2 was tested using on Statistical packages for Social Science (version 21) at 5% level of significance.

Presentation of Data

Table 4.1.0 Response Rate

Questionnaire	Frequency	Percentage
Copies of Questionnaire Returned	111	85
Copies of Questionnaire Lost	17	13
Questionnaire Copies distributed	128	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 4.1.0 above shows that a total of 128 copies of questionnaire were distributed, 111 were collected and 17 were not retrieved.

Test of Hypotheses

Test of Hypothesis One

H_{01}: Avoidance strategy has no significant relationship with job satisfaction in the performance of First Bank of Nigeria, Awka, Anambra State.

Table 4.3.1 Correlation between avoidance strategy and job satisfaction

Correlations

		Avoidance strategy	Job satisfaction
Avoidance strategy	Pearson Correlation	1	.612**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.022
	N	111	111
Job satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.612**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.022	
	N	111	111

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

Result Summary

Table 4.3.3 shows that there is significant relationship between avoidance strategy and job satisfaction with r=0.612, n=111 and p value of 0.022 (p<0.05). Therefore, we accept the alternate hypothesis and conclude that there is significant positive relationship between avoidance strategy and job satisfaction in First Bank Branches in Awka, Anambra State.

H_{01}: Collaboration strategy has no significant relationship with work relationship in the performance of First Bank of Nigeria, Awka.

Test of Hypothesis Two

H_{02}: Compromise strategy no significant relationship with goal attainment in the performance of First Bank of Nigerian, Awka.

Table 4.3.2 Correlation between compromise strategy and goal attainment

Correlations

		Compromise strategy	Goal attainment
Compromise strategy	Pearson Correlation	1	.742
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.043
	N	111	111
Goal attainment	Pearson Correlation	.742	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.043	
	N	111	111

Result Summary

Table 4.3.2 shows that there is significant relationship between compromise strategy and goal attainment with r=0.742, n=111 and p value of 0.043 ($p<0.05$). Therefore, we accept the alternate Hypothesis and conclude that there is significant positive relationship between compromise strategy and goal attainment in First Bank Plc, Awka branches, Anambra State.

Summary of Findings

Based on the test of hypotheses in this study, findings revealed that there is positive relationship between Conflict Resolution and organizational Harmony in selected branches of First Bank Plc, Awka, Anambra State through the following findings;

1. The outcome of the first hypothesis revealed that there is significant relationship between avoidance strategy and job satisfaction with r=0.612, n=111 and p value of 0.022. This implies that avoidance strategy towards managing conflict would often result in job satisfaction, as no emotions would be affected.

2. The second hypothesis tested shows that there is significant relationship between compromise strategy and goal attainment with r=0.742, n=111 and p value of 0.043. This implies that compromise strategy results in timely attainment of goals as parties forfeits their personal interests and work towards goal attainment.

Conclusion

The study concluded that conflict resolution technique of avoidance and compromise are effective and as such foster healthy work environment towards outstanding performance of the organization It was concluded in the study that compromise as a strategy would compel employees to let go of the bottled grievances and personal interests but rather work towards attaining goals in the organization. Compromise strategy is tolerance oriented as employees tolerate the erring staff in course of getting the job done.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Management should adopt emotional intelligence practices such as social skills, self-awareness and social awareness to have adequate knowledge of the personalities within an organization to always adopt conflict avoidance strategy. This will guarantee peaceful work place and high job satisfaction

2. There is need to adopt a system of compromise through sensitization of staff as it will give them the right job behaviour towards attainment of organisational goals.

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