CONFLICT MANAGEMENT FOR EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE IN AN ORGANIZATION THE CASE OF FEDERAL MEDICAL CENTER, OWERRI

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of conflict management on effective performance in Federal Medical Centre; Owerri. The study adopted the Descriptive research design. Conflict Management and Organizational Performance Questionnaire (COMOPQ) was administered on 620 respondents. Four research questions and two hypotheses were formulated for the study. Data for the research questions were analyzed using frequency and percentage while chi square was used to analyze the hypotheses. A total of 620 respondents were selected for the study using stratified sampling technique. to low productivity.. employees, there should be efficient and effective communication between and among all categories of the employees in the organization, and integrative conflict management strategies should be used by organizations .This will reduce conflicting situations in the organization.

Keywords: Conflict, Management, Employee, Performance, Organization.

INTRODUCTION

An organization consists of several people with different attitudes, feelings, needs and perceptions. Individual differences may cause misunderstanding and conflicts between individuals and groups. Interpersonal and intergroup conflicts therefore, affect the organization either negatively or positively. Thus, conflict management is required to resolve conflicts and maintain order, otherwise organizational performance may suffer.

Conflict is normal and inevitable in the society, particularly, in a public workplace, where people of different origins, backgrounds, and interests co-exist and function to achieve common organizational goals. Individual and group objectives differ and attempt to achieve them will certainly lead to depriving others of their interests, thereby causing conflict in the workplace Oudeh, (2014). The workplace relationship is a mixture of conflict and cooperation, both of which occur in different degrees in different organizations at any one time and the balance between the two can vary over time and between different localities (Marchington & Wilkinson, 2002). Conflict and cohesion work together to shape a team's effectiveness, and indeed, conflict Management can be an important developmental process for organizations.

Conflict is a condition of disharmony or hostility within an interaction process which is usually the direct results of clash of interest by parties involved, Oloyede (1999). In many organizations employers dictate both wages as well as condition of service resulting in many industrial conflict

and social ill such as poor working condition, non-payment of salaries and persecution of labour union activities. It is pertinent to note that in a situation where management tends to maximize profit and neglect workers good working conditions, with little or no motivation conflicts are bound to occur. Conflict arises when there is a change in situations where change is seen as a threat to be challenged or resisted. Where the change process is frustrated, this may produce an aggressive reaction..

Efficient and effective management of conflicts is fundamental to the development of any society, but the prevailing situations in Federal Medical Centre, Owerri constitute a reversal of this reality. Given the fact that conflict is inevitable in organizations and hospitals occupy a delicate position in the health and wealth of a nation such that their performance invariably affects the health and economy of the nation. It is important to research into how hospitals manage their conflicts to ensure effective organizational performance

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Cases of work place conflict abound in Nigerian work situations. Usually, they are between the management of the various organizations and their respective labour unions. In any organization, be it public, private or government establishment, there is bound to be disagreement, misunderstanding and contradiction from time to time. It is realized that the level of economic productivity of any organization is measured in terms of the relationship and the capacity to keep conflict at a reduced or minimized rate. Some of the identified problems inherent in an organization include: lack of good management policy, low salary earning, lack of effective communication, and lack of fulfillment of benefit equally brings about conflict in an organization. With reference to FMC, Owerri, observations have shown that conflict exists at various levels among the management and union leaders. Under such situation national development suffers because patients are not attained to some even lose their lives; ''a healthy nation is a wealthy nation." The problem of the study therefore is: What is the relationship between conflict management and organizational performance?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main research objectives are given below:
1 To identify the types of conflicts that exist in the study area.
2. To examine the major causes of conflict in the study area.
3. To assess the effects of conflict in the study area.
4. To ascertain the conflict management strategies employed by the Management of Federal Medical Centre, Owerri.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
1   What are the types of conflict that exist in the study area?
2 What are the major causes of conflict in the study area?
3 What are the effects of conflict in the study area?
4 What are the conflict management strategies employed by the Management of Federal Medical Centre, Owerri?

STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESES
Research Hypothesis 1

Ho: There is no significant relationship between conflict management and organizational

performance.

H1: There is significant relationship between conflict management and organizational
performance.

Research Hypothesis 2:

Ho: Non integrative conflict management strategies do not influence the effectiveness
of conflict management.

H1: Non integrative conflict management strategies influence the effectiveness of
conflict management.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
Concept of Conflict

Conflict has been defined in several ways by many authors. Obi (2012) defined conflict as an act of discontentment and contention which either the workers or employers of labour utilize to put excessive pressure against each other so as to get their demands.each other in an organization. Rahim (1992) holds that conflict is an interactive process which is manifest in incompatibility and disagreement. Importantly, conflicts arise due to clash of interest between individuals or groups, while pursuing a particular objective.

Conflict is normal and inevitable in human life, and therefore cannot be completely avoided in human relations; it could be destructive as well as productive in an organization. Hotepo et al. Otite (2001) and Ajala (2003) collaborated with the above views on conflict and added that conflict is a normal part of organizational life and are used as a way of settling problems originating from opposing interests for the continuity of the society. of the active actors in organizations. Thus, in the absence of common values in organizations, conflict is bound to occur. Ayoko & Pekerti (2008) carried out an analysis of the relationship between conflict types, conflict features, communication openness and workplace trust. They identified three components of conflict types: task, relationship and process.

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➢ **Process Conflict:** This refers to disagreement about rules and procedures for task accomplishment (Jehn & Mannix, 2001), e.g. when group members disagree about whose responsibility it is to complete a specific duty. Process conflict is associated with low esteem, decreased productivity and poor team performance. Other forms of conflict include:

> ➢ Inter organizational conflict.

> ➢ Interpersonal conflict;
> ➢ Intra group conflict;
> ➢ Inter group/Inter departmental conflict

. (Onwubiko, 2004).

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Conflict management is crucial in any organization since conflict is inevitable in contemporary organizations. It can be negative and can cause deep rifts in an organization; it can also be used as a tool to take organizations to a new level of effectiveness.a focus on interests (Gordon, 2004).

Conflict can be managed in different ways, Robinson *et al* (1983) advocates that managing conflict toward constructive action is the best approach in resolving conflict in organizations.. . A traditional way of coping with conflict is to *compromise*, agreeing with the other person's view or demand.

Avoidance of the situation that causes the conflict is an example of an interpersonal approach to conflict management. Another approach is *forcing*, pushing one's own view on others; this, of course, will cause overt or covert resistance

Organization

An organization is a social entity with collective goals that is linked to an external environment. Organization according to Umar (2012) is a process which integrates different types of activities to achieve organizational goals. Organization is an effective and necessary instrument for the attainment of predetermined goals. All organizations have a management structure that determines relationships between the different activities and the members, and subdivides and assigns roles, responsibilities, and authority to carry out different tasks. Organizations are open systems; they affect and are affected by their environment.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study derives its theoretical foundation from the Conflict Theory propounded by Karl Marx. Marxism is a method of socioeconomic analysis, which analyzes class relations and societal conflict, this approach stresses class relations and conflict irreconcilability. The theory explains the role of power and its differentials and material dialectics in the society. According to Marx (1859) "the society is stratified into two major contending classes: the ruling class (that is, the haves) and the subject class (that is, the have not's). ''The ruling class derives power from the ownership and control of the forces of production, which it uses to exploit and oppress the subject class". The inequality in relationship between the ruling and subject classes results in a conflict of interest. Based on the views of Marx, Crossman (2014) stated that conflict theory explains the role of coercion and power in producing social order. Inequality exist due to the fact that those in control of a disproportionate share of the resources actively protect their resources and positions, leaving the subject class (masses) without an adequate share , thus the masses persistently pursue for change in the system to enable them partake in the value. With

respect to the study area (FMC,Owerri), the employers(The Management of FMC) constitute the ruling class while the employees(represented by the labour unions) are the subject class. Furthermore, this thesis holds that these two major classes are involved in social unrest which culminates in social revolution. Those who are exploited are angry while those exploiting them are happy.

Both labour unions and management pursue their interests, and struggle to control the available resources at the detriment of others, thereby causing a conflict of interest in the hospital. The conflict arises when unions request for improved welfare packages and good working conditions, believing that the management has the resources at her disposal, but their demands are denied, and management insists that the employees work and produce results at the maximal output in the hospital. This theory simply posits that the ruling class makes their profit through exploitation of workers, as employers pay employees less than what they deserve. Based on the theory, workplace conflict becomes inevitable in FMC, Owerri as the performance of the workers is determined to a large extent by the wages they receive, to enable them afford the basic needs of life, and when payment is not commensurate to work input, it affects their productivity and living standards and results to workplace conflict.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Area

Historically, what is known today as the Federal Medical Centre (FMC) Owerri, was established in 1904, by the then British colonial masters as a military hospital to cater for the health needs of British soldiers who were then engaged in the war of conquest of territories in Igboland.

The facility was later renamed African Hospital, and with the passage of years, it was converted to a General Hospital to provide the health needs of not only soldiers but also civilians living in the area and beyond. Federal Medical Centre Owerri is a government owned hospital located in Owerri Municipal local government area of Imo State, Nigeria. FMC, *Owerri* is located on latitudes 5°25"50.23'N and longitude 7°2"149°.33'E. It is bordered in the north by Amakohia, in the east by Works Layout, in the west by Nwaorie River and in the South by Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri.

Research Design, Population and Sampling Technique

The study adopted a descriptive research design. According to Nworgu (1991.58) descriptive surveys are those studies which aim at collecting data and describing in a systematic manner, the characteristics, features and facts about a given population. The survey was purposively conducted in FMC, Owerri, with a total population of 2500 (Corporate Affairs Unit, FMC 2016). Stratified random sampling technique was employed to select 620 respondents, thus, restricting the sample size to 25% of the total workforce in the organization. The basic criteria for inclusion in the sample were job rank and organizational tenure of not below 5years. Respondents were categorized into two: Male and Female staff.

Method of Data Collection

The sources of data that were used in this study are both primary and secondary sources of data.
Primary source

Primary source was the respondents to whom the questionnaire was administered for the purpose of data   collection. The instrument used was structured questionnaire tagged "Conflict Management and Organizational Performance Questionnaire" (CMOPQ). The questionnaire consists of two sections (A & B); Part A consists of questions necessary to generate adequate biographical information about the respondents, while Part B consists of questions necessary to generate useful data for the study. Out of the 620 copies of the questionnaire administered, 600 copies were retrieved and useful for analysis. The data collected through the primary source ensured that only reliable and accurate data were used in the work.

Secondary sources

The secondary data were obtained through library research and documented materials such as textbooks, journals, magazines, bulletins, newspapers, government publications, unpublished works, and internet materials.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected through questionnaire were presented in tables and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Frequency count and percentages were put to use in the analysis of research questions while the research hypotheses were tested using Chi Square statistical analysis. The research hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

RESULT OF FINDINGS

Table 1: Showing the Gender of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	330	55.0
Female	270	45.0
Total	600	100

Source: Field Work (2016)

Findings on the biographical data of the respondents revealed that majority of the respondents (55 %) are men while (45%) are women.

Table 2: Showing the Age Distribution of the Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
21-30	24	4.0
31-40	140	23.3
41-50	280	46.7
51 and above	156	26.0
Total	600	100

Source: Field Work (2016)

The age description of respondents as shown in Table 2 revealed that, (46.7 %) are between the ages of 41 and 50 years, while (26 %) are 51 years and above.

Table 3: Showing Working Experience of Respondents

Working Experience(Years)	Frequency	Percentage
5-10	71	11.8
11-15	259	43.2
16-20	204	34.0
20 and above	66	11.0
Total	600	100

Source: Field Work (2016)

The respondents who have working experience of 11-15 years are in the majority (43.2%), followed by those that have worked for 16-20 years (34%). The third ranked is those who have 5-10 years experience (11.8%)..

Research Question 1: What are the types of conflict that exist in the study area

Table 4

Types	Agree	Percentage	Disagree	Percentage
Union– Management conflict	424	70.7	176	29.3
Job task conflict	220	36.7	380	63.3
Inter personal conflict	152	25.3	448	74.7

Source: Field Work (2016)

The findings as shown in Table 4 revealed that 70.7 % of the respondents are of the view that the major type of conflict that exists in the study area is Union –Management Conflict, followed by job task conflict (36.7%)

Research Question 2: What are the major causes of conflict in the study area?

Table 5

Causes	Agree	Percentage	Disagree	Percentage
Privatization policy of the management	502	83.7	98	16.3
Financial recklessness	425	70.8	175	29.2
Intimidation of labour leaders/ Violation of	427	71.1	173	28.8

agreement				
Withholding of salaries and promotion of qualified staff	364	60.7	236	39.3
Autocratic management strategies.	324	54	276	46

Source: Field Work (2016)

It is observed from the table that the major cause of conflict in the study area is the attempt by the management to privatize some departments of the centre . This was supported by 83.7% of the respondents. 427 respondents representing 71 .1% of the respondents maintained that intimidation of union leaders is another cause of conflict in the centre, others include financial recklessness (70.8%), withholding salaries and promotion (60.7%) and autocratic management strategies (54%).

Research Question 3: What are the effects of conflict in the study area?

Table 6

Effects	Frequency	Percentage
Wastage of resources and time	38	6.3
Loss of life	54	9.0
Low productivity	292	48.7
Industrial action	154	25.7
Loss of job/suspension	32	5.3
Strained relationship	30	5.0
Total	600	100

Source: Field Work (2016)

Table 6 shows that six (6) variables were identified by the respondents as the effects of workplace conflict in FMC,Owerri. Among the effects are low productivity having 48.7 %, industrial action with 25.7% respondents, loss of life 9% responses, wastage of resources and time having 6.3% and other respondents perception shows the effect of loss of job as 5.3% and strained relationship as 5%.

Testing of hypothesis:

Ho: There is no significant relationship between conflict management and organizational performance.

H1: There is significant relationship between conflict management and organizational performance.

Table 7: Conflict Management does not impact on Organizational Performance.

Responses	Male	Female	Total
Agree	40	50	90
Disagree	290	220	510
Total	330	270	600

Source: Field Work (2016)

 Table 8: Chi Square Analysis Showing relationship between Conflict Management and Organizational Performance.

N	Df	Level of sig	X^2 cal	X^2 tab	Decision
600	1	0.05	4.766	3.841	Reject H_0

Source: Field Work (2016)

At the significant level of 0.05% and degree of freedom 1, the critical value of X^2 is 3.841 while the calculated value of X^2 is 4.766, since the calculated value is greater than the critical value, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. There is a significant relationship between conflict management and organizational performance. The finding is consistent with the argument of (Poitras & Tareau, 2007) that there is a positive relationship between conflict management and organizational performance. The respondents believe that proper conflict management promotes stable working environment which will encourage organizational performance.

Research Question 4: What are the conflict management strategies adopted by FMC, Owerri?

Table 9: Summary showing Conflict Management Strategies adopted by FMC, Owerri.

Strategies	Agree	Percentage	Disagree	Percentage
Threat to life of union leaders	425	70.8	175	29.2
Expulsion/sack	480	80.0	120	20.0
Dialogue between all parties	45	7.5	555	92.5
Suspension	392	65.3	208	34.7
Delay and negligence	398	66.3	202	33.7
Government Intervention	402	67	198	33

Source: Field Work (2016)

Based on table 9, 480 respondents representing 80% supported that the strategy employed by the hospital authority in conflict management was through expulsion/sack. Few of the respondents representing 20% disagreed. 555 respondents (92.5%) stated that the hospital management does not employ joint consultation /dialogue between all parties involved in conflict management.

Testing of Hypothesis 2:

Ho: Non integrative conflict management strategies do not influence the effectiveness of conflict management.

H1: Non integrative conflict management strategies influence the effectiveness of conflict management.

Table 9: Non integrative conflict management strategies do not influence the effectiveness of conflict management.

Responses	Male	Female	Total
Agree	32	47	79
Disagree	298	223	521
Total	330	270	600

Source: Field Work (2016)

Table 10: Chi Square Analysis Showing the Perceived influence of management strategies on conflict management in FMC,Owerri.

N	Df	Level of sig.	X^2cal	X^2 tab	Decision
600	1	0.05	7.7108	3.84	Reject H_O

Source: Field Work (2016)

At the significant level of 0.05% and degree of freedom 1, the critical value of X^2 is 3.841 while the calculated value of X^2 is 7.7108, since the calculated value is greater than the critical value, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. Non integrative conflict management strategies influence the effectiveness of conflict management in FMC, Owerri. The non-integrative strategies of confrontation, intimidation, domination, competition and avoidance influence the effectiveness of conflict management. The finding is in line with the work of Kazimoto(2013) that the use of integrative strategies in conflict management yields positive results.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings it is quite evident that conflicts occur in organizations as a result of violation of agreement, competition for supremacy, leadership style, intimidation, etc. This reduces staff satisfaction about the job and also reduces productivity. Thus, early recognition of the conflict and paying attention to the conflicting parties is very important. Organizational conflicts should be viewed as an aid to creativity, innovation and growth. Conflict can be made a primary source of organizational learning, development, innovation and ultimately, competitive advantage.

Recommendations

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

- ➢ Organizations should make adequate room for decision making.
- ➢ To ensure optimum organizational productivity, staff welfare should be taken into consideration.
- ➢ Participatory, rather than autocratic style of leadership should be encouraged by organizations.
- ➢ There should be an increase in budgetary allocation to government institutions, to checkmate the challenges of inadequate funds, and for the provision of adequate office facilities for effective work.
- ➢ The salaries and other legitimate entitlements of the employees should be paid as at when due to reduce conflict.

- ➢ Management of organizations should adopt integrative strategies(collective bargaining, accommodation) to resolve and manage conflicts as they arise before escalating to unmanageable level.

- ➢ There should be effective communication channel, proper system of information dissemination and adequate human relation in the workplace to create room for negotiation and dialogue when necessary.
- ➢ Workshops and seminars should be organized for both the management staff and labour union officials, on contemporary approaches to conflict management, to reduce workplace conflict.

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