
Forms, significance and management of Intra-Organizational Conflict in Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Nigeria: Implications for Human Resource Management

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Abstract

The concept of conflict has been projected as an inevitable aspect of organizational life for which researchers and managers have devoted considerable resources and attention but the area of small and medium scale enterprises [SMEs] has received only sparse reference leading to a wide gap in knowledge as to whether conflict situation actually occurs in the organizations, and if they do, how do they manifest? What are the impacts on performance and how effective are the administrative tools for managing them? This study attempts to bridge this gap. We adopt a survey method to study the nature, significance and management of conflict in the selected organizations using a sample of 224 employees across a spectrum of industries. While the prevalence of conflict was established in the study amongst the employees, compensation, reward and performance rating issues are most frequent sources of the conflict with behavioral manifestation including productivity scale down, damaging organizational reputation and image as well as discouraging potential applicants. The study also found that most of the administrative tools to manage conflict are not considered very effective while a variation in the gender awareness to conflict was observed at level of statistical significance. The study recommends conflict minimization strategies through proper goal definition, open communication, fair reward and compensation system.

Key words: intra-organizational conflict, conflict management, small and medium scale enterprises, human resource management and performance management.

Background

The studies in organizational conflict have produced a lot of literature, which stress the importance of conflict as source of concern to managers and/or organizations and the larger society but according to Rössel (2013), despite these interests, it remains a rather fuzzy theoretical paradigm in sociological thinking. The term conflict is often used in at least three important meanings: firstly, to summarize the theoretical tradition in sociological theory, which deals with conflict, power, domination and social change, exemplified by authors like Karl Marx, Max Weber and George Simmel. Secondly, it is applied to denote the analysis and explanation of social conflicts in different sociological paradigms and in other behavioral sciences. Finally, the label conflict theory is often applied to substantive research on power structures, domination,

conflict, and change. However, the early class dynamics perspectives of conflict gained prominence through the work Karl Marx, which contemporary thinking (i.e., Jones et al. 2000) shows that conflict is an inevitable part of organizational life arising out of goal differences between different stakeholders as well as resulting from competition for jobs, resources, power, recognition and security (Adomi and Anie, 2005). Despite the abundance of literature on organizational conflict, the aspect of intra-organizational conflict has received very sparse attention particularly how this impact the human resource management system. This paper is designed to bridge this gap in knowledge and to propose a template to identify manifestations of conflict while suggesting ways of minimizing its negative effects on employee performance and productivity.

CONFLICT: A CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The mainstream of organizational literature is generally ambiguous in delineating the concept of conflict. The term "Conflict" has been used at one time or the other in the literature to describe:

1. Antecedent conditions of competitive behaviors in which case conflict centers on scarcity of resources or on policy differences;
2. Affective states of the individuals involved in the conflict such as their expression in stress, tension, hostility or anxiety, etc.
3. Cognitive states of the individual actor in the conflict such as their perception or awareness or conflicting situation; and
4. Finally conflicting behavior; ranging from passive resistance to overt aggression.

Attempt to decide which of these cases epitomizes conflict is likely to result in an empty controversy. The problem is not the choice among these alternative conceptual definitions, since each may be a relevant stage in the development of a conflict, but to try to clarify their relationships. One of the early attempts to resolve this controversy was by Pondy (1967) who treated the development of conflict as a dynamic episode each starting where the last left off and ending with some set of conditions that may lead to another conflict. His analysis provides neither a criterion; nor conceptual distinction that could help to resolve the controversy. However, what seems most obvious from all the literature is the consensus that all human relations may be viewed as interlaced by two closely related processes – the conflict and the integrative.

Another dimension added by Liffer (1974) stated that conflict could result from perceived as opposed to open aggression. This definition becomes more relevant when one considers the fact that most literature of industrial relations treats conflict as synonymous with open aggression such as strike. This dimension to the definition of conflict is of particular interest to this study. The feelings of relative deprivations may refer to feelings of dissatisfaction or discontent with one's present level of achievement with respect to any given goal. It may denote demotivation with current relationship that affects individual commitment to organizational objectives etc., (Hopper and Pearce, 1973).

To pursue our definition a step further, Dahrendorf (1989) said that all relations between sets of individuals or groups that involve incompatible objectives are likely reasons for social conflict that may often be confused with competition in which there are likely exclusive goals. According to Boulding (1962) whereas all cases of conflict involve competition in the above sense, not all cases of competition involve conflict. It is therefore apparent that there may be no single way of defining the concept, but what could be said with reasonable certainty is that conflict is a social phenomenon that exist in one form or the other in inter-personal or group relationships where there is opposing interests or goals. To Barker et al. (1987) conflict takes three basic forms, which consist of task conflict, interpersonal conflict, and procedural conflict that tend to occur within organizations.

Consequently, managing conflict requires proper understanding of the nature and characteristics of the particular incident, which will be helpful in designing and implementing the human resource actions necessary to resolve it. Some authors however have adopted a more positive view of conflict by arguing that some levels of conflict is desirable for organizational development since it allows the exchange of ideas and assist better performance amongst the group members (Jehn, 1995), and improves group learning and accuracy in situation assessment (Fiol, 1994), promotes the development of new ideas and approaches (Baron, 1991) and improves the quality of decisions (Schwenk and Valacich, 1994).

According to Henry (2009) conflict is seen as a productive force that can stimulate members of the organization to increase their knowledge and skills and contribute to organizational innovation and productivity. We therefore theorize that the greater the ability of a unit or group to interfere with the goal attainment of another unit, the more internal conflict will be generated particularly when there is jurisdictional ambiguity.

Jurisdictional ambiguity or uncertainty over the authority relationships among organizational subunits is an important antecedent to intra-organizational conflict. In an empirical examination of a large number of suggested antecedent conditions to conflict, jurisdictional ambiguity was found to be one of the most consistent correlates of intergroup conflict (Walton; Dulton and Caffety 1969). Similarly, White (1961) found that the manipulation of

uncertainty along with tactics designed to increase the autonomy of a unit on tasks that required the cooperation of several departments consistently resulted in conflict among these departments. Landsberger (1961) suggested that conflict tended to be higher in lateral relationships in organization; since the authority relationships among laterally related units were less clear than in vertical relationships.

Theoretical Framework

Conflict has been defined as occurring within a dynamic framework with each conflict process passing through four distinct stages related and modified by various factors. These stages are; Latent, Perceived, Felt and Manifest, otherwise referred to as the Conditions, cognition, affect and behavior as seen in the fig.1 below.

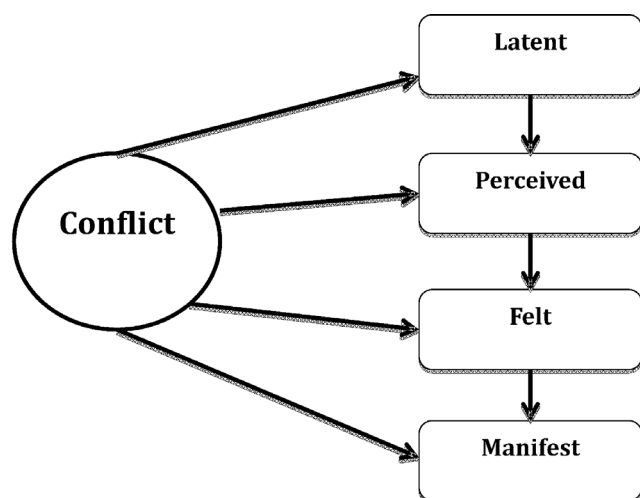


Fig. 1: A Model of Stages of Conflict

Latent Conflict (Conditions)

Latent conflict could be condensed into three types; (a) competition for scarce resources; (b) drives for autonomy and (c) divergence of sub-unit goals. Generally competition forms the basis for conflict when the aggregated demands of participants for resources exceed the resources available to the organization; autonomy needs form the basis of conflict when one party either seeks to exercise control over some activities that another party regards as his own province or seeks to insulate itself from such control. Goal divergence is the source of conflict when two parties who must cooperate on some

joint activities are unable to reach a consensus on concerted action. An important form of latent conflict is role conflict. The role conflict model treats the organization as a collection of role sets, each composed of the focal person and his role senders. Conflict is said to occur when the focal person receives incompatible role demands or expectations from the person in his role set (Kahn et al op cit. P. 11 – 35)

Perceived Conflict

Conflict may sometimes be perceived when no condition of latent conflict exists, and latent conflict condition may be present in a relationship without any of the participants perceiving the conflict. The schematic model by Pondy (op cit) explained this situation. In his opinion, conflict is said to be a manifestation of the parties misunderstanding each other's true position. It is often proposed that such conflict can be resolved by improving communication between the parties. However, if the party's true position is in opposition, then more communication – especially open – may only exacerbate rather than ameliorate the conflict. For example, fundamental differences between workers and management might result from faulty communications. It is assumed by using this point of view that if communication is improved that this may only highlight the differences and therefore increase the likelihood of manifestations of conflict.

The more important case that some latent conflicts fail to reach the level of awareness also required to be explained. The important mechanisms that limit perception of conflict are the suppression mechanism [ibid]. The suppression mechanisms are more applicable to personal related conflicts than to organizational conflict or values. Thus, the individuals are forced to sink their differences and cooperate. While the attention-focus mechanism, is related more to organizational behavior than to personal values. Here attention may be focused on issues external to the parties in conflict. Such as the union – management conflict instead of intra-union conflict etc.

Felt Conflict

There is an important distinction between perceiving conflict and feeling conflict. “A” may be aware that “B” and “A” are in serious disagreement over some policies,

but it may not make “A” tense or anxious and it may have no effect whatsoever on A’s affection toward B. Thus felt conflict may arise from other sources, independent of the type of latent conflict, but latent conflicts may provide appropriate targets (perhaps symbolic ones) for undirected tensions.

Manifest Conflict

Manifest conflict denotes any of several varieties of open conflict behavior. The most important and obvious of these is open aggression, but such physical and verbal violence is usually proscribed by organizational norms. Except for an extreme labor unrest, violence as a form of manifest conflict in organizations is rare. The motivation towards violence may remain, but they tend to be expressed in less violent form. How then can one decide when a certain behavior or pattern of behavior is conflict? One important factor is that the behavior must be interpreted in the context in which it takes place. In other words, knowledge of the organizational requirements and of the expectations and motives of the parties appear to be necessary to characterize the behavior as conflict. This suggests in essence that behavior should be defined to be conflict if, and only if some or all of the participants perceive it to be so. While also highlighting that conflict may have both functional and dysfunctional components. When one evaluates the outcome of a conflict episode, we only perceive it as good or bad according to some value system. Thus, some particular manifest conflict may result in personal cost such as anxiety or frustration and be considered undesirable. The same conflict might be beneficial to the organization’s functioning and be judged favorably by someone with a different value system (Cloke & Goldsmith, 2000).

Given the broad range of factors that may be considered conflicting in organizations, the antecedent implications may actually be more devastating than originally believed and this paper argues that if conflict are not managed properly they will have negative impacts on performance as well as the organizational results. Unresolved conflict may actually be more likely to contribute to productivity problems than actual individual ability level. Employees that experience high incidents of conflict are less likely

to be motivated at their current job and if no procedures are open to resolve the conflict they are likely to engage in self-help mechanism or exit as a last option.

Methodology

Two hundred and fifty questionnaires containing the conflict variables drawn from the reviews was drawn and administered randomly to employees of selected small scale and medium size organizations [SMEs} in parts of Lagos, Ogun and Kwara State with diverse interests in oil and gas, agriculture, manufacturing, consulting, transportation, professional services, hospitality, insurance and financial services. 231 of the questionnaires [i.e., 92.4%) were returned out of which 7 were considered incomplete and excluded from the analysis leaving 89,6% (224) used for the purpose of data for this study. Variables of conflict sources, manifestations and management were defined into a Likert type scale. A brief description of the instrument shows that section [A] seek to obtain information on background such as gender, years in employment, functional roles, management level, and educational qualifications. Section [B] asks respondents about conflict variables in their experience on a 5-level frequency scale, while section [C] seeks to assess the significance of impacts of conflict on their performance and results on a-5 level scale from Extremely Significance to Extremely Insignificant. Section [D] was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the organizational tools to manage internal conflicts. Data obtained were analyzed with the aid of IBM SPSS 21 using descriptive statistics i.e., percentile for analyzing the responses as well as Levene’s test of equality of variance to evaluate gender differences.

In statistics, Levene's test is an inferential statistic used to assess the equality of variances for a variable calculated for two or more groups. Some common statistical procedures assume that variances of the populations from which different samples are drawn are equal. Levene's test assesses this assumption. It tests the null hypothesis that the population variances are equal (called homogeneity of variance or homoscedasticity). If the resulting p-value of Levene's test is less than some significance level (typically 0.05), the obtained differences in sample variances are unlikely to have

occurred based on random sampling from a population with equal variances. Thus, the null hypothesis of equal variances is rejected and it is concluded that there is a difference between the variances in the population. Data are presented in tables and bar charts.

Data Analysis and Findings

The background characteristics of respondents in the survey are shown in Table 1 below. The analysis shows that gender distribution was 61% male and 37% female while 4% of them work in engineering function, 18% in marketing, 28% in general administration including HRM, 31% in operations and manufacturing functions and 19% in finance and accounting.

Respondents Background

Table 1. Analysis of Background Characteristics of Respondents

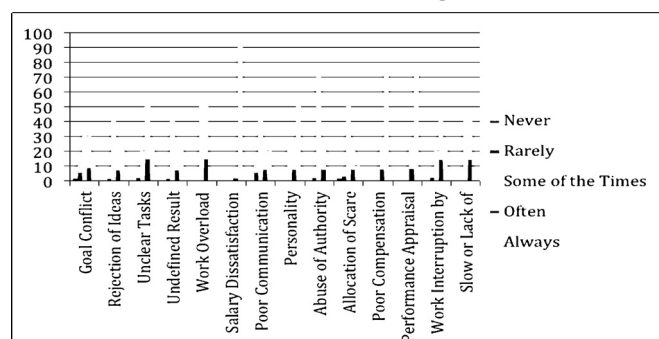
Respondents Background		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
		N= 224			
GENDER	Male	136	60.7	60.7	60.7
	Female	88	39.3	39.3	100
FUNCTION	Engineering	9	4	4	4
	Marketing	40	17.9	17.9	21.9
	HRM Administration	63	28.1	28.1	50
	Operations	63	28.1	28.1	78.1
	Manufacturing	7	3.1	3.1	81.3
	Finance	42	18.8	18.8	100
LENGTH OF SERVICE	below 5 years	41	18.3	18.3	18.3
	6 to 10 years	110	49.1	49.1	67.4
	11 to 15 years	65	29	29	96.4
	16 to 20 years	8	3.6	3.6	100
AGE	25 to 35 years	157	70.1	70.1	70.1
	36 to 45 years	57	25.4	25.4	95.5
	46 to 55 years	10	4.5	4.5	100
MANAGEMENT LEVEL	Junior	66	29	29	29
	Supervisor	106	47.3	47.3	76.3
	Assistant Manager	54	24.1	24.1	96.4
	Manager	8	3.6	3.6	100
HIGHEST QUALIFICATIONS	Diploma	105	46.9	46.9	46.9
	First Degree	112	50	50	96.9
	Postgraduate Diploma	1	0.4	0.4	97.3
	Masters	6	2.7	2.7	100

Source: Study fieldwork by author.

It further reveals that 18% of respondents have services below 5 years, while about half the population [49%] falls within 6 to 10 years. In terms of age distribution, the majority of the study population falls within the ages below 35 years; 25% of them are junior employees, 47% supervisors and assistant managers and managers accounted for 28% of the study population. The educational qualifications show that 47% have diploma type qualifications with 50% having a first degree or it's equivalent.

Figure 2. Shows the identified sources of conflict by the respondents answering the survey question 'how frequently do you or others experience the following conditions in your organization?'

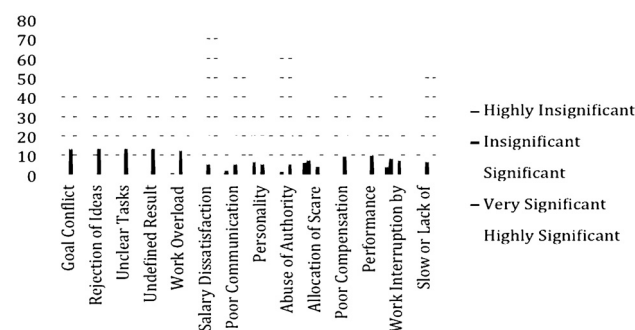
Figure 2. Bar Chart showing the prevalence of conflict variables in the organizations



Source: Study fieldwork by author.

Figure 3. is a bar chart which shows the significance of the identified sources of conflict by the respondents answering to the survey question 'Please specify the level of significance you and /or others are likely to attach to the experiences listed above in relation to how you perceive a conflict situation'

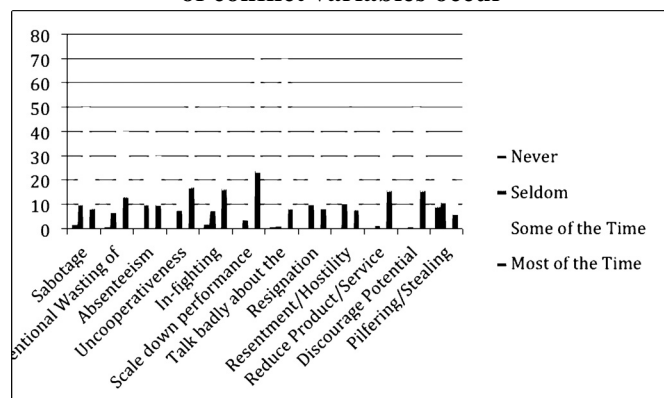
Fig.3 showing the significance attached to each of the conflict variables by respondents



Source: Study fieldwork by author.

The chart below reveals the behavioral manifestation of conflict by the respondents answering the survey question 'in your opinion/observation how frequent do employee exhibit the following behavior to a conflict situation such as shown above'.

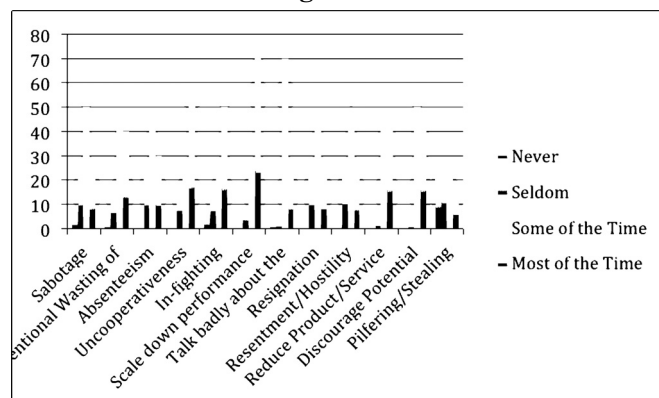
Figure 4. How often the behavioral manifestation of conflict variables occur



Source: Study fieldwork by author.

Figure5 below shows the perception of the effectiveness of selected conflict management tools used by organizations

Figure 5 showing the effectiveness of conflict management tools



Source: Study fieldwork by author.

Table 2 shows the group statistics of the conflict variables between the male and female gender

Gender		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	LEVENE'S TEST	
						F	Sig.
Goal conflict	Male	136	3.53	.501	.043	.230	.632
	Female	88	3.45	.501	.053		
Rejection of ideas	Male	136	3.24	.548	.047	6.882	0.009
	Female	88	4.55	.501	.053		
unclear Tasks	Male	136	3.71	.668	.057	5.990	0.015
	Female	88	4.45	.501	.053		
Undefined Work Expectations	Male	136	3.65	.683	.059	130.241	0.000
	Female	88	3.91	1.002	.107		
Work overload	Male	136	4.53	.501	.043	.230	.632
	Female	88	4.45	.501	.053		
Salary Dissatisfaction	Male	136	5.00	.000 ^a	0.000	.3	.3
	Female	88	5.00	.000 ^a	0.000		
Poor Communication	Male	136	3.65	.683	.059	130.241	0.000
	Female	88	3.91	1.002	.107		
Personality differences	Male	136	3.12	.967	.083	300.234	0.000
	Female	88	3.45	.501	.053		
Abuse of authority	Male	136	3.41	.494	.042	2713.333	0.000
	Female	88	3.00	0.000	0.000		
Scarce resources allocation	Male	136	3.82	.988	.085	2713.333	0.000
	Female	88	3.00	0.000	0.000		
Poor compensation	Male	136	4.88	.323	.028	113.499	0.000
	Female	88	4.45	.565	.060		
Performance Appraisals	Male	136	4.59	.494	.042	448.554	0.000
	Female	88	4.95	.209	.022		
Slow Promotion	Male	136	4.47	.501	.043	1.939	0.165
	Female	88	4.89	4.156	.443		
Work Interruption	Male	136	3.82	.988	.085	752.627	0.000
	Female	88	2.92	.312	.033		

Source: Study fieldwork by author.

Table Group statistics based on the Mean conflict awareness level between Male and Female employees and the evaluation of gender variances by Levene's Test assuming equality of Means between the two genders. The result shows significant variance in the conflict awareness between the genders at statistical level of significance at 95% degree of confidence except for conflict awareness and slowness or lack of promotion while conflict relating to salary dissatisfaction is evenly distributed in both population and suggesting that salary is a major concern and source of intra-organizational conflict in the selected organizations.

Table 3. below presents the data on what behavioral indicators result from intra-organizational conflict . The table shows the analysis to determine whether there is a gender variation in the mean level of conflict response behavior between Male and Female employees in the sample population and to test whether any likely variations are significant at statistical level of significance. The Levene's Test indicates a split in the likely behavioral manifestations or reactions to conflict. The data show that male employees are more likely to adopt sabotage [Mean 3.35] than Females [Mean 2.45] although this was not found to be statistically significant while females are more likely to increase the wastage level as a reaction than men

Table 3 shows the group statistics of the conflict behavioral responses between the male and female gender in the sample population

Behavioral Reactions by Gender		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	LEVENE'S TEST	
						F	Sig.
Result to Sabotage	Male	136	3.35	.590	.051	1.884	.171
	Female	88	2.45	.501	.053		
Result to Increase in Wastage	Male	136	3.35	.590	.051	1.884	.171
	Female	88	2.45	.501	.053		
Result to Absenteeism	Male	136	3.59	.494	.042	2713.333	.000
	Female	88	4.00	0.000	0.000		
Result to Uncooperativeness	Male	136	3.94	.236	.020	291.181	.000
	Female	88	3.45	.501	.053		

Result to in-fighting	Male	136	3.76	.548	.047	6.882	.009
	Female	88	2.45	.501	.053		
Result to Lowering Output	Male	136	3.53	.530	.045	1404.147	.000
	Female	88	4.00	0.000	0.000		
Result to Damaging Organization Image	Male	136	2.99	.584	.050	17.213	.000
	Female	88	3.44	.500	.053		
Result to Resignation	Male	136	2.69	.694	.060	8.955	.003
	Female	88	3.45	.501	.053		
Result to Hostility	Male	136	3.21	.751	.064	5.605	.019
	Female	88	2.55	.501	.053		
Result to Lowering Product Quality	Male	136	3.37	.618	.053	3.044	.082
	Female	88	3.55	.501	.053		
Result to Discouraging Applicants	Male	136	3.39	.586	.050	1.600	.207
	Female	88	3.55	.501	.053		
Result to Stealing	Male	136	2.88	.985	.084	16.992	.000
	Female	88	1.45	.501	.053		

Source: Study fieldwork by author.

Discussion

Managing conflict is one of the key functions of managers as they organize people and work structure to maximize production and profit for their organizations. The nature of any managerial environment is dynamic and characterized by rapid change, which has either constructive or destructive consequences on the business. This depends greatly on the process of managing these changes in the light of the procedures performed by the managers (Mushref, 2002). Identifying conflict processes, their manifestation and impact become imperative for managers of SMEs where resources are always major concerns. Hocker and Wilmot (1995) discuss several methods of ending conflicts: (1) avoidance, (2) conquest and (3) procedural resolution of some kind, including reconciliation and/or compromise and/or award. Avoidance of conflict often leads to intensified hostility and may later cause greater problems for the group. Therefore, one of the first steps in conflict management is to recognize that a conflict situation exists, because ignoring its existence cannot make it disappear on its won. This study actually leads us to assume that conflict is prevalent at work and their manifestation takes the different forms shown in Figure 2 above among others.

Of particular interest to this study is not just a list of conflicting behaviors in organizations but their significance and behavioral impact on performance.

Hence we can infer from Figure 3 that conflict leads to behavioral consequences that negatively impact the individual performance and subsequently those of the organization. The study found the following negative outcomes very significant sabotage, high wastage level, in-fighting, hostility, withdrawal of cooperation, absenteeism, tampering with product quality, stealing and discouraging potential applicants from joining the organization which has potential impact on recruitment. This study showed that intra-organizational conflict is not a simple, single phenomenon but a cocktail of behaviors that find expression in many context while some are 'substantive others are affective'. The substantive conflict derived from the structure of work and work expectations such as goal conflict, resource allocation, work overload, poorly defined work performance expectations, compensation issues, disagreement over performance appraisals, the authority relationship and work design particularly the interdependency of work that makes interruption possible. The affective conflict is derived from interpersonal relationship and emotional responses to conflict incidents such as poor communication, resentment of others and promotion.

The aspect of behavioral manifestation of conflict is shown in Figure 4 above that indicate that employees result into sabotage, uncooperativeness, performance scale-down, reputation damaging and discouraging potential applicants which may have fundamental impact on recruitment drive, and quality of management pipeline. To test whether male and female employees react similarly to conflict situation, the study found that females are more likely to react from rejection of ideas, unclear tasks and work overload than male employees. The Levene's Test shows that this variance is statistically significant at $P \leq .05$. It further shows that female employees are more likely to manifest conflict behaviors due to poor communication, personality differences, abuse of authority and other forms of conflict included in this study at statistical significance levels except for goal conflict, work overload and promotion that are equally shared between the genders. We can on the basis of this data reasonably assert that there is gender variances to conflict manifestation in organization with female

employees showing higher means of conflict behaviors than males for rejection of ideas [Male 3.24, Female 4.55] and unclear tasks [male =3.71 and Female = 4.45] as shown in Table 2 above. Managers should therefore be more sensitive to gender differences in handling conflict particularly when the data show that Female employees are more likely to adopt avoidance and withdraw strategies than males as a form of behavioral reaction to conflict. See Table 2 above.

Conclusion and Recommendation

We have observed that conflict within organizations takes different forms while offering a number of opinions on what constitutes a conflict. It is generally seen as deriving its sources from competition amongst units or groups, goal incompatibility, competition for limited resources, work overload and interruption and personality differences [could also include cultural or value differences] as well as those that emanates from compensation and performance appraisals amongst a list of other sources. A model explains the stages of conflict, which is said to progress through a defined process of latency, cognition, affect and manifest [behavior]. The study shows that conflict behavior is manifested in various forms in the selected organizations and that a significant variation in this behavior occurs at statistical level of significance between the male and female genders. The study also found that while there are a number of conflicts behavioral outcomes as shown in Figure 4 most prevalent are scaling down of performance and damaging the image of the organization.

The efficacy of management administrative tools for managing conflict may not be very effective as found out in this study report as contained in Figure 5. The unions and resignation are perceived to be the most effective options followed by the role of HRM in terms of effectiveness assessment. This may likely be the nature of SMEs in the country some of which do not create effective structures for employees expression of conflict that made the unions to play such significant roles i.e., where they are recognized- and seen to be more effective in terms of representation and conflict management.

Organizations in more advanced economies are employing the alternative dispute resolution methods such as arbitration which the study result found to be considered highly ineffective. The implications of the above finding on human resource management is self evident in view of the disruptive nature of conflict on organizational performance and the reported ineffectiveness of most of the common conflict management tools included in the study. The roles of the joint consultative committee, supervisor and the grievance procedure have been recognized as organizational system for conflict management. However we found that these tools are not likely effective as the study data suggested. Poor conflict management systems and tools may likely contribute to performance problems in the organizations as suggested by this study data. Especially, with the reported manifestation of productivity restriction, image damaging and discouraging potential applicants.

It is therefore imperative for HRM to overhaul the conflict management and build into the system effective machineries for preventing and/or managing conflict. Goals should be clearly defined and the participation of the employees in setting goals is encouraged while adopting some systems of conflict preventive measure such as open communication with the objectives of encouraging compromise, fair reward and performance management system that are likely to minimize intra-organizational conflict. Boulding (1962), states that the biggest challenge in developing the institutions of conflict administration in organization is the development of an effective action plan to identify conflicts at its initial stage. Conflict situations are frequently allowed to develop to almost unmanageable proportions before anything is done about it and by this time it is often too late to resolve the conflict by peaceable and procedural means. Knippen and Green (1999) recommends that the processes to manage conflict should include active participation by parties that involves describing the conflict situation to the other person, asking the other person how he sees the conflict situation, responding the way the other person sees the situation. Jointly, deciding how to resolve the conflict and making a commitment to

resolve the conflicts by summarizing action taken by each party to solve the conflicts and promising to be committed in future to continue resolving conflicts which might arise. Given that conflict is an enduring part of organizational life, it is unlikely that it can be removed, the challenge to HRM is the design of systems that minimizes the negative impacts of conflict on performance and employee productivity.

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