



IMPACT OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES ON PERFORMANCE IN TRANSPORTATION SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

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This study examined how conflict management strategies influence the organizational performance of Peace Mass Transit Ltd. The survey research method was adopted for the study. Data were collected using a questionnaire. The population of the study comprises the purposively selected 255 staff of Peace Mass Transit Ltd, Enugu state. The hypotheses were tested with Simple Linear Regression Analysis. It was found that compromising as a conflict management strategy has a significant influence on the performance of Peace Mass Transit Ltd ($\beta = 0.230$ at $t=4.272$; $\text{sig}=p=.00<.05$). Also, accommodating as a conflict management strategy has a significant influence on the performance of Peace Mass Transit Ltd ($\beta = 0.230$ at $t=2.459$ and $\text{sig}=p=.015<.05$). Similarly, avoiding as a conflict management strategy has a significant influence on the performance of Peace Mass Transit Ltd ($\beta = .146$; $t=3.118$; $p<0.05$). It is concluded that management should train employees on how best to positive use conflict management styles in organizations.

KEYWORDS: Conflict management strategies, compromising, accommodating, avoiding, organizational performance

INTRODUCTION

Conflict occurs in groups, individuals, organizations, and government, as well as inside families. Team dynamism may be improved by the conflict between groups or organizations (Mary Ann, 2000). Conflict is defined as "a dynamic process that happens between interdependent parties as they experience negative emotional reactions to perceived disarrangements and interference with the fulfillment of their goals" (Barki and Hartwick, 2009). Conflict is the impression of disparities in people's interests (Thompson, 1998). A

disagreement over interests or ideas is commonly referred to as conflict (Esquivel and Kleiner, 1997).

Conflict management involves implementing strategies to reduce negative aspects of conflict, increase positive aspects of conflict, and improve performance and effectiveness in a structured setting. The goal of conflict management is to educate groups on conflict resolution skills such as managing conflict, self-awareness about different types of conflict, and successfully communicating while in conflict with a team member,

rather than eliminating or avoiding disagreements (Wangari, 2013)

The strategies that a company like Peace Mass Transit Ltd uses to resolve disagreements influence the company's overall performance as well as the performance of its employees. As a result, the conflict has both beneficial and bad consequences for organizational performance. Constructively handled conflicts promote harmonious relationships among employees, foster employee performance, improve an organization's profitability and growth prospects, enhance the standard of organizational decisions, inform organizations on effective ways to handle future conflicts based on previous conflict experience, reduce unhealthy competition between employees and management, and ensure organizational resources are effectively used (Obasan, 2011; Uju, 2010; Korir, et al, 2015). Conflicts that are destructively managed or badly handled waste resources, discourage people from performing at their best, create disharmony between staff and management, and make achieving organizational goals difficult.

Conflict management is essential in the workplace for preventing conflict and allowing employees to focus on their tasks. Conflict management goes a long way toward developing employee bonds, and half of the problems are solved automatically. At work, employees must be motivated and find every day exciting and challenging. No business runs for the sake of charity; it must make a profit in order to stay in business. (Ogbor and Orishede, 2013).

Employees must give their all at work in order to achieve optimal productivity. If staff are continuously bickering and criticizing one another, nothing productive will ever come out. At work, conflict management is essential in order for employees to focus on their tasks. The team leaders must guarantee that each employee's tasks and responsibilities are clearly communicated to them. Employees should be encouraged to interfere with one another's tasks. Employees waste half of their time and energy battling with co-workers, making it difficult for them to complete the work that they are paid to do. A person must enjoy his or her work; otherwise, he or she will never be able to give it their best. (Ogbor and Orishede, 2013).

Today, nearly all successful local and national organizations spend the majority of their time resolving conflicts among their employees and other stakeholders such as customers, suppliers, legislative bodies, the government, and its regulatory agencies, the community in which they do business, opinion leaders, and other

interest-based organizations and parties in negotiation on how to improve organizational performance and efficiency socially, ethically, and economically (Ogbor and Orishede, 2013). Therefore, the objectives of this study are to: determine the influence of compromising as a conflict management strategy on organizational performance; examine the influence of accommodating as a conflict management strategy on organizational performance; and access the influence of avoiding as a conflict management strategy on organizational performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational Conflict

Putnam and Poole (1987) describe the conflict as "the interaction of interdependent people who perceive opposition of goals, aims, and values, and who see the other party as managerial techniques that could obstruct the accomplishment of these goals." Organizational conflict occurs when different individuals or organizations' aims, interests, or values are incompatible, and those individuals or groups hinder or frustrate each other's attempts to fulfill their goals. Because the aims of different stakeholders, such as managers and employees, are often incompatible, these actions and reactions make conflict an unavoidable element of organizational life (Nafiza and Nahida, 2017)

Many brilliant brains have studied conflict over the centuries; however, only since the twentieth century has it been able to conduct a more thorough investigation. Theoretical debates over the subject of conflict and its resolution, on the other hand, have lasted throughout the study's history. Conflict is a means of resolving and averting complete disintegration, thereby preserving some form of unity. Conflict, like other terminologies, is filled with uncertainty, leaving many academics and administrators unsure of (1) what it means and (2) how to best deal with it (Schellenberg, 1996).

Conflict is linked to violence, destruction, inefficiency, and irrationality in the normative conception of conflict, which is influenced by a preoccupation with stability and equilibrium in organizational design. This type of conceptual myopia was particularly invidious in suggesting that administrators are responsible for preventing, regulating, or eliminating disagreement (Wescott, 1998).

Descriptive approaches call into question the assumptions' entire basis and rationale. They allow us to get away from a cliché by implying that any social transaction in which parties (whether structured or defined) compete for scarce resources or values has the

potential for conflict (Williams & Kinicki, 2003). (Thompson, Aranda, and Robinson's, 2000) proposed that conflict refers to all types of antagonistic encounters, using the term in a broad meaning. It can be defined as a situation in which two or more people have conflicting goals and their perceptions and behaviors reflect that incompatibility

Similarly, Bohannan (1967) considers conflict to be as fundamental to society as culture, which may be managed and used for better cultural growth and the maintenance of social order. Conflict, according to Schellenberg (1996), is neither good nor bad, but rather an important part of human social existence. Conflict is an aspect of social existence, and society is impossible without it, according to Gluckman (1956), Gulliver (1963), and Nanda (1994). Furthermore, Marxists see conflict as not only inherent in the social order but also as the primary force for change (Seymour-Smith, 1986).

Conflict is defined by Robbins (2005) as a process that begins when one party believes that another party has or is about to negatively affects something that the first party cares about. He agrees with the definition since it emphasizes that conflict is about perception rather than concrete facts. Using a word like care, it points to the emotional nature of the conflict. It specifies that more than one party is involved, as well as the possibility of a future component. To be in conflict implies to be at odds with one another. It refers to a conflict between individuals or members of a group. All human relationships include disagreements of this nature.

Conflict is "part of the competition process that is fundamental to the survival and successful development of the species, homo-sapiens, and his search for new and better ways to cope with limited resources and stress from environmental change," according to Larfela (1988). According to this definition, conflict always exists between individuals, groups of individuals, members of an organization, and organizations that are related in some way.

Rivers (2005) published a study claiming that categorization (between us and them) alone is enough to promote conflict. This is referred to as the "social identity theory." This categorization occurs when groups are; created, representing various functions inside an organization, and it supports the idea that it is unavoidable. Conflict is natural and unavoidable, but when handled appropriately, it can be productive, relevant, and creative.

Conflict Management Strategies in Organizations

Conflict management strategies, according to Rahim (2002), are focused on the adoption of effective approaches to reduce the dysfunctional consequences of conflict while enhancing its functional element in order to increase organizational learning and effectiveness. It's also the term for the process of using interpersonal communication to help two parties that are at odds come to an agreeable and satisfactory arrangement (Omoluabi, 2001).

Conflict management has been increasingly significant because it was identified as an unavoidable occurrence that pervades a wide range of organizational processes and consequences. As a result, scholars have devised a variety of approaches and strategies to address destructive conflict, which is usually detrimental to the company. Thomas (1976), for example, outlined five conflict management strategies: avoiding, accommodating, competing, compromising, and collaborating. Khan (2013) cited domination, integrating, compromising, avoiding, and obliging as conflict management strategies, whereas Hussein, Salem Al-Mamary, and Hassan (2017) used five dimensions: avoiding, compromising, forcing, issue solving (cooperation), and accommodating. Conciliation, negotiation, arbitration, mediation, and litigation are used by others.

Avoiding Strategy

The avoiding style of conflict management is thought to be low in assertiveness and cooperativeness, according to Thomas and Kilmann (1976). When someone is in this conflict mode, they are aware that there is a conflict but choose to ignore, sidestep, be non-committal, or withdraw from the topic or conversation. It puts the parties in a lose-lose situation where they choose not to address one other's feelings, opinions, or aspirations. Rather than dealing with the conflict, problem, or disagreement, efforts are taken to avoid or delay it. The objective is to prevent conflict, at least for the time being (Thomas and Kilmann, 1976).

When people or groups in conflict have a tendency to withdraw from the conflict scenario or remain neutral, the avoiding style of conflict management is applied. This management style is neither assertive nor cooperative. The other party's relationship is unimportant. People who are emotionally affected by the tensions and frustrations of conflict frequently practice avoidance, according to Tosi et al (1994). This could be because they have been hurt in previous conflict situations and are now attempting to distance themselves from those painful memories. They also suggest that people avoid conflict because they believe it is wicked,

unnecessary, or undignified, and they do it by withdrawing or simply abandoning the scene of conflict. Tosi et al (1994).

Accommodating Strategy

According to the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, accommodating or harmonizing is the "peacekeeper" conflict style since it is more concerned with preserving relationships than with accomplishing a personal goal or result. In a dispute, however, this might result in a lose-lose situation where the accommodating party chooses to accommodate the wants of the other, sometimes out of kindness, and sometimes to avoid conflict or stress. When this decision is taken, the result is "giving in" and allowing the other person to "take." While this may appear to be a weak or ineffective position, there are times when it is better and will benefit a person more than taking a firm position. In the "give and take" process, it can be both a productive and unproductive strategy (Thomas and Kilmann, 1976).

Accommodating entails minimizing or ignoring real or perceived differences in order to focus on the other person's perspective on the problem. A manager who uses an accommodating style of conflict management is more concerned with the other party's needs than his own. A person who uses an accommodating style of conflict management, according to Schermerhorn (2000), is cooperative but assertive. To maintain unity, they conform to others' wishes, smoothing over or overlooking differences. Accommodation produces a lose-win situation and a positive relationship between the parties. This relationship is created, according to Hellrigel and Slocum (1996), when people plead for cooperation and strive to reduce tension and stress by offering reassurance and support for the other person's viewpoints.

Competing (Dominating) Strategy

Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilmann's conflict style profiles describe competing as a power-driven mode with high assertiveness and low cooperativeness. It creates a win-lose situation in which one party tries to achieve his or her aims at the expense of the other. It could include "hard bargaining" or the use of a person's power, position, wealth, or other forms of clout. There is no regard for the other party's feelings, opinions, or interests, and little desire to collaborate or compromise. When confronted with another who wants something different, the goal is to win or succeed in reaching one's desired outcome (Thomas and Kilmann, 1976).

The competitive or dominating style entails using coercion and other forms of power to exert control over other people or groups in order to pressurize them to

embrace your point of view. It entails being assertive but non-cooperative, working against the other party's wishes and engaging in a lose-lose competition, and/or forcing through the use of authority (Schermerhorn 2000). According to Barsky (2002), competitors are persons who are unconcerned about their own wants. They have a strong desire to impose their will and have a poor level of cooperation.

Dominating is a power-oriented style, according to Ivancevich and Matteson (1996). To utilize it effectively, one must have sufficient power and authority to compel the other person or group to accept one's decision. Because he or she is higher up in an organizational hierarchy and thus has more authority than others, such an individual may hold the balance of power. He or she may have crucial control over essential resources such as budgets, personnel, and important knowledge, or he or she may be allied with powerful groups.

Compromising Strategy

Compromise entails the willingness of both parties to give up some of their own points of view in order to reach an agreement. When a compromise style of conflict management is adopted, there is no clear winner or loser, and the outcome is likely to be unsatisfactory for both parties. (Mbithe, 2013).

The giving-and-taking approach of compromise entails both parties giving up something in order to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. It could mean dividing the difference, making concessions, or attempting to find a medium ground (Mbithe, 2013). It's appropriate when the conflicting parties' interests are mutually exclusive or when both equally powerful sides, such as labor and management, have achieved a deadlock in their negotiations. This style can be effective when dealing with strategic issues, but a significant dependence on it, according to others, can be dysfunctional (Cherono 2007). According to Matthias (2007), the compromise style is characterized by behavior that is intermediate in terms of assertiveness and cooperation. This strategy is built on a give-and-take procedure that may include bargaining.

Compromise is effective in dealing with interpersonal conflict when it benefits both parties, according to Newton & Davis (2002). When goals are essential but not worth the effort or potential disruption of more assertive techniques, compromise is used, according to Okumbe (2001).

Collaborating Strategy

The collaborative style of conflict management is sometimes referred to as problem-solving or integrating. It involves working through conflicting differences and resolving issues so that everyone wins. It aims to resolve conflict by focusing as much as possible on the problems of both parties. (Brahnam et al., 2005).

The literature appears to favor the employment of a collaborative management style, claiming that collaborative management methods produce better decisions than distributive strategies (Brahnam et al., 2005). As Brahnam et al. (2005) point out, because there is typically less emphasis on competitive negotiation in modern business and more on inter-organizational relationships, it is not surprising to find that the most valued conflict management strategy in business is collaboration, which is the win-win style of managing conflict, namely collaborating is the only conflict management style that considers the interests of both parties and focuses on mutual gains (Van Slyke, 1999 in Goodwin, 2002).

In fact, each of these strategies has a wide range of effects on the behavior of organizations and managers. Accurate application of styles does, in fact, lead to organizational growth and employee satisfaction (Behfar, Peterson, Mannis & Trochim, 2008). Employees that are aware of the proper working methods have a better working environment and have fewer negative feelings about their work (Kavousi, 2008).

Organizational Performance

Why certain organizations succeed while others fail has long been a topic of discussion in the business world. Organizational performance has always been a priority for all businesses, whether for profit or not (Barney, 2008). Managers must be aware of the factors that influence an organization's success in order to take the appropriate steps to address them. It hasn't been easy, however, to define, conceptualize, and measure performance. Researchers disagree on how to define performance, and this is still a point of contention among organizational researchers (Barney, 2008). According to Javier (2007), as referenced by Nikbin et al (2010), performance is equivalent to a program's or activity's famed 3Es (economy, efficiency, and effectiveness). Organizational performance, on the other hand, is defined by Daft (2009) as an organization's ability to achieve its objectives by utilizing resources efficiently and effectively. Organizational performance, as defined by Richardo and Wade (2010), is the organization's ability to achieve its goals and objectives.

Not only has organizational performance suffered from a defining issue, but also from a conceptual issue. According to Hefferman and Flood (2006), organizational performance suffered from a lack of conceptual clarity in a number of areas as a concept in modern management. The first was the definition area, and the second was the measuring area. The terms "performance" and "productivity" were frequently interchanged. Productivity is a ratio that shows how much work can be done in a given amount of time. Performance is a broad term that encompasses not only productivity but also quality, consistency, and other factors. Productivity measures were frequently addressed in result-oriented evaluations. According to Richardo and Wade (2010), performance measures can include result-oriented behavior (criterion-based) and relative (normative) measures, education and training, concepts and instruments, including management development and leadership training, all of which are necessary for the development of performance management skills and attitudes. As a result of the above, the term "performance" should be expanded to cover effectiveness, efficiency, economy, consistent behavior, and normative measures (Richardo and Wade, 2010).

Hypothesis Formulation

The following hypotheses are postulated for this study;

- H₁:** Compromising as a conflict management strategy has a significant influence on organizational performance
- H₂:** Accommodating as a conflict management strategy has a significant influence on organizational performance
- H₃:** Avoiding as a conflict management strategy has a significant influence on organizational performance

METHODOLOGY

This study used the survey research design was used. The design is ideal because it enabled the researcher to move to the study area and administer the instrument to the participants involved and test hypotheses or answers to research questions. The questionnaire contained closed-ended questions. The copies of the questionnaires were self-administered to the respondents which included top-level, middle level and first-line management and staff of the selected establishment. The study population consists of various departments in Peace Mass Transit Ltd Enugu and at the time the research was conducted the population is about 706. The population covers respondents from the Management Unit, Finance Unit, Operations Unit, Repairs, and Maintenance Unit, and the drivers. A sample of two

hundred and fifty-five (255) staff were purposely selected from Peace Mass Transit, Enugu State. The validity and reliability tests of the instrument were

properly done. Liner Regression Analysis was used in the test of hypotheses.

RESULTS

Demographic Profile

Table 1 Sex Distribution of Respondents

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	148	61.7
Female	92	38.3
Total	240	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 4.1.2 shows the responses of staff sex distribution. In the table, 148 respondents representing 61.7% of the respondents stated that they are males while the remaining 92 respondents representing 38.3% stated that

they are females. Therefore this table reveals that the majority of the respondents are males.

Table 2 Age Distribution of Respondents

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-24	6	2.5
25-29	34	14.2
30-35	105	43.7
36 -49	95	39.6
50 years and above	-	-
Total	240	100%

Source: Field Survey 2021

Table 4.1.3 shows the age distribution of respondents. In the table, 6 respondents representing 2.5% out of the entire respondents are within the age of 18-24 years, 34 respondents representing 14.2% are within the age

bracket of 25-29 years, 105 respondents representing 43.7% are within the age bracket 30-35 years, while 95 respondents representing 39.6% indicated 36-49 years. Hence, the majority of the respondents fall within 30-35 years.

Table 3 Distribution of Education Qualification

OPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
SSCE	85	35.4
NCE/OND	104	43.3
HND/B.Sc	41	17.1
M.Sc /Ph.D	10	4.2
Total	240	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

The above table 4.1.4 shows the responses of the respondents regarding their education qualifications. In the table, 85 respondents representing 35.4% indicated that they were in possession of SSCE qualification, 104 respondents representing 43.3% indicated that they have NCE/OND qualification, 41 respondents representing 17.1% indicated that they were in possession of HND/B.Sc. qualification while the remaining 10

respondents representing 4.2% indicated they have M.Sc/P.hD.

Test of Hypotheses

H1 Compromising as a conflict management strategy has no significant influence on organizational performance

Table 4 ANOVA for Hypothesis 1

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	20.123	3	6.708	47.403	.000 ^b
	Residual	25.612	236	.142		
	Total	45.735	239			

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Compromising
- b. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

Table 4.2.1b shows that the F-value is the Mean Square Regression (47.403) divided by the Mean Square Residual (0.142), yielding $F=47.403$. The model in this table shows that compromise is statistically significant at (Sig =.000) and is a significant predictor of organizational performance at $F_{(3,184)} = 47.403$.

Test of Hypothesis Two

H2. Accommodating as a conflict management strategy has no significant influence on organizational performance

Table 5 ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.503	3	.835	4.035	.008 ^b
	Residual	37.418	236	.207		
	Total	39.921	239			

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Accommodating strategy
- b. Dependent Variable: Organizational performance

Table 4.2.2b shows that the F-value is the Mean Square Regression (0.835) divided by the Mean Square Residual (0.207), yielding $F=4.035$. The model reveals that accommodating strategy is statistically significant at (Sig =.008) therefore it is a significant predictor of

organizational performance at $F_{(3,184)} = 4.035$.

Test of Hypothesis Three

H3.Avoiding as a conflict management strategy has no significant influence on organizational performance

Table 6 ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	25.064	3	8.355	73.155	.000 ^b
	Residual	20.671	236	.114		
	Total	45.735	239			

- a. Predictors (Constant): Avoiding strategy
- b. Dependent Variable: Organizational performance

Table 4.2.3b shows that the F-value is the Mean Square Regression (8.355) divided by the Mean Square Residual (0.114), yielding $F=73.155$. The model reveals that avoiding strategy is statistically significant at (Sig =.000) therefore it is a significant predictor of organizational performance at $F_{(3,184)} = 73.155$

international previous studies of Raimi and Adias (2018) whose results showed that compromising has a positive link with industrial harmony. The findings further showed that collective bargaining procedures have not been sufficiently followed to address grievances in the organization and even where they have been followed, agreements have not been significantly implemented. Furthermore, a study done by Bello and Kinge (2014) revealed that collective bargaining plays an active role in the management of the state industrial conflicts in

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result revealed that compromising as a conflict management strategy has a significant influence on organizational performance. This is consistent with

Taraba state and its role led to the resolution of the 2009 and 2011 state-wide strikes.

The result revealed that accommodating as a conflict management strategy has a significant influence on organizational performance. This result is consistent with Olu and Abolade (2013) that show that effective conflict mediation enhances employee performance thereby improving organizational performance and that organization's conflict management system influences employee performance in the organization. Also, the study of Mukolwe, Korir, Eliza, Milka, and Joseph (2015) agreed that interpersonal conflict strategies, relationship conflict, and task conflict significantly affect organizational performance respectively, while an outcome of interpersonal conflict does not significantly affect organizational performance. Their study further revealed that organizations that implemented effectively Alternative Dispute Resolutions in their conflict management systems are more strategically aligned in providing the organizations with a competitive advantage and cause many of the criticisms that could lead to interdepartmental conflicts seize.

The result revealed that avoiding as a conflict management strategy has a significant influence on organizational performance. This result is coherent with the study conducted by Olu and Abolade (2013) which showed conflict avoidance enhances employee performance in an organization and that organization's conflict management system influences employee performance in the organization. Additionally, Kagucia and Poipoi (2014) revealed that avoiding conflict resolution strategies had a positive effect on employee performance. It was concluded that employees' performance was affected by avoiding strategy and that organizational factors moderate the relationship between avoiding and employee performance.

CONCLUSION

It was observed in the course of this study that the existence of conflict in the management of any organization is inevitable. Conflict offers organizations both positive and negative outcomes depending on how it is managed. When an organization promotes constructive conflict, it promotes industrial harmony among the members of the organization hence, everyone's voice, opinion, or demand is being paid attention to either on the basis of compromising, collaborating, or accommodating depending on the nature of the conflict. When dysfunctional conflict is properly managed, it discourages people from performing at their best, creates disharmony between staff and management, and makes achieving

organizational goals difficult. However, compromising strategy, accommodating strategy, and avoiding strategy is an effective tools for conflict management in an organization. Hence, the study concludes that conflict management strategies affect the organizational performance of Peace Mass Transit Ltd

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