



Conflict management strategies and its perceived impact on job performance of secretaries in an organisation

¹ Ishola N. Adeniyi, ² Olubato Felicia Yemisi, ³ Aliu Zainul Abideen, ⁴ Dr. Adebayo Taiwo Omoleye & ⁵ Lawal Imran Babatunde

¹ Department of Technology and Vocational Education, University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos

^{2,4} Department of Office Technology and Management, Federal Polytechnic Ede, Osun State

^{3,5} Department of Office Technology and Management, Federal Polytechnic Ayede, Oyo State

² ORCID iD: 0009-0007-8787-3830

Abstract

This research investigated the impact of conflict management on the work performance of secretaries within a company. The methodology employed a survey design. The research population comprised fifty-one secretaries at Federal Polytechnic Ede, Osun State. Three research enquiries were posed. A standardised questionnaire, entitled "Influence of Conflict Management on Job Performance of Secretaries in an Organisation Questionnaire (ICMJPSOQ)," was utilized for data collection. The instrument's reliability coefficient was calculated using the Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient, resulting in a value of 0.61. The study issues were addressed using mean and standard deviation. The findings indicated that comprehensive elimination of conflict is unattainable; managers who attempt to eradicate conflict are unlikely to survive. But those who effectively manage it tend to reap institutional advantages and personal fulfilment. Although disagreements, when adeptly handled, may be very beneficial to secretaries, they exist in both personal and professional contexts. This underscores the complexity of conflict dynamics in organizational settings. It was advised among other recommendations that management should implement conflict management strategies that enhance organisational performance; facilitate open communication between management and employees and foster interpersonal relationships among colleagues to elevate morale.

Keywords: FinTech, Consumer Protection, Regulatory Regime, Data Protection

Introduction

Nebgen (2013) asserts that conflict is an integral aspect of human existence. It is an

enduring gift of life, despite the existence of differing perspectives about it. Some may see conflict as an unfavourable situation that has

to be avoided at all costs. Others may see it as a phenomenon that requires management. Ogonor (2014) posits that conflict management is a strategy used to reduce the frequency of adverse encounters by strengthening the barriers to conflict and averting the onset of provoking events. Ogonor (2014) asserts that conflict management seeks to mitigate and prevent violence between two parties. It encompasses any actions undertaken before, during, or after a dispute, aiming at alleviating its consequences and ensuring that all sides coexist in peace, harmony, and orderly behaviour. Igbinoba (2011) defines conflict management as a word denoting an unresolved issue. It is a technique used by individuals to resolve conflicts.

Conflict management involves alleviating the adverse impacts of conflict while amplifying its advantageous aspects. The aim of conflict management is to enhance learning and group outcomes, including effectiveness or performance within an organisational framework. Effectively handled conflict may enhance collective results. Conflict management mitigates the effects of conflict while fostering beneficial results, aiming to enhance organisational learning (Alper, Tjosvold, and Law 2010). Conflict management entails the incorporation of all elements that may facilitate conflict resolution or its prevention. The elements include enhancing communication, fostering discipline within the organisation, and considering the life stages of the involved persons. Diverse writers are acquainted with numerous methodologies for conflict management (Fox, 2012).

Rahim (2012) defines conflict management as the process of using chosen solutions to address a dispute, aiming to minimise negative consequences and maximise good outcomes. Conflict management emphasises strategic implementation to achieve favourable results. The concept of 'conflict management' is employed within the realms of business management and marketing communication (contexts), encompassing various interpersonal (e.g., familial, marital, friendship) dynamics, organisational (e.g., macro-level, interteam, supervisor-subordinate) structures, intercultural (e.g., host-guest, adaptation, competence) interactions and public relations (e.g., multinational corporations, local communities). It finds application in numerous training scenarios: healthcare, higher education, community settings and therapeutic environments. However, the effectiveness of these applications may vary, because the intricacies of conflict are often context-dependent; this complicates the generalization of strategies. Although training is essential, one must consider the unique characteristics of each environment.

Harrison (2011) noticed that the meaning of the term secretary consistently pertains to the profession, signifying a respected rank within administration. The term encyclopaedia defines secretaries as stenographers elevated to more significant positions. A stenographer typically does only the tasks explicitly given to her. However, a secretary often does tasks that need more initiative, responsibility, and executive competence. The success of every organisation significantly depends on the

secretary, whose supporting function is essential for achieving organisational goals and objectives.

The work performance of secretaries encompasses all activities undertaken by a secretary to provide a portion of the inputs necessary for the company to attain its goals. The performance of a secretary is assessed during job evaluations, with the employer considering factors such as work quality, cooperativeness, loyalty, resourcefulness, reliability, conduct, self-improvement efforts, and experience to evaluate each secretary based on merit. Annual job performance evaluations often ascertain a secretary's eligibility for advancement or their unsuitability for the organization's payroll (Fauzah, Noryati, & Zaharah, 2011).

Improperly handled conflict within an organisation might lead to the secretary's frustration if she perceives a lack of viable solutions or feels that her thoughts are disregarded by her supervisor or colleagues. Consequently, tension manifests. This negatively impacts her career and work performance. Secretaries may have issues such as insomnia, hunger fluctuations, migraines, and may become unapproachable (Ukadike, 2011). Given that conflict seems to be inevitable, it is essential for managers to identify its origins, assess both its constructive and destructive potential, and acquire the skills to handle it effectively while using conflict resolution techniques in a practical manner (Fleerwood, 2010). The study aims to examine the impact of conflict management on the work performance of secretaries inside a company.

Statement of the Problem

Conflict within an organisation is inevitable. Numerous elements contribute to this, including employment skills, organisational abilities, dependability, timeliness, and the degree of duties. It was noted that the majority of conflict reasons inside an organisation remain unknown to the secretaries, who, if informed, might have addressed them, therefore avoiding the conflict from arising. The secretaries has less or no understanding of the impact of conflict inside a company. They possess no understanding of procedures applicable to settling this dispute. The subpar or exceptional work performance of a secretary within an organisation may be ascribed to unresolved conflicts or inadequate conflict management.

Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this study was to investigate into influence of conflict management on job performance of secretaries in an organisation. Specifically, this study sought to:

- 1) Identify conflict management styles in an organisation
- 2) Examine the influence of conflict management on job performance of secretaries in an organisation.
- 3) Suggest methods used in resolving conflicts in an organisation.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study;

- 1) What are the conflict management styles in an organisation?

- 2) What are the influence of conflict management on job performance of secretaries in an organisation?
- 3) What are the methods used in resolving conflict in an organisation?

Literature Review

Various academics' perspectives have led to different understandings of conflict and conflict management. Conflict is "a social phenomenon emerging from immediate or gradual changes that generate divergent interests and wants," according to Chandraskhan (2009). According to Coser and Ukadike (2006), conflict may be understood as a way for society to resolve challenges caused by different interests and the fact that society is persistent. Conflict, according to Wilson and Kalb (2010), is an attempt at a definition that involves communication and interaction between individuals or groups. For them, disagreements are inevitable in any kind of interaction, but they are more common in complex societies with little resources.

The term "conflict management" is all-encompassing, according to Aghedo (2014). A phrase, a tactic, and a field of study are the three main interpretations that surface upon closer inspection. In order to facilitate a positive change in behaviour, conflict management is a process that lessens the impact of conflicts. In a nutshell, it's a methodical approach to dealing with everything from origins to effects to dynamics to transformation to resolution. The goal of conflict management is to prevent or lessen the severity of conflicts via various

interventions. Any official complaint that an employee files with their direct supervisor about issues at work is considered a conflict (Rose, 2014). Management is the process by which an organisation organises, plans, and executes its activities in order to accomplish its intended and expected objectives. Communities may get the products and services for which they have paid if management is effective (Stevenson, 2011). Maintaining healthy and productive disagreements is the goal of conflict management. If managers want to master conflict management, they need to train their employees to be productive even when tensions run high and distinguish between healthy disagreements and those that are harmful to the company. An understanding of ethics is necessary for conflict management (Batcheldar, 2010).

According to Berkovitch (2013), the goal of conflict management should be to avoid conflicts wherever possible and to resolve them quickly and effectively when they do occur. Conflict, he said, may be a force for positive change, raising morale and productivity in the workplace. Employee happiness and productivity take a nosedive when conflicts go unchecked. Organisational leaders send the message that poor performance on the job and unacceptable conduct are acceptable when they choose to ignore workplace disagreements. According to Awan and Anjum (2015), effective conflict management fosters open dialogue, collaborative decision-making, consistent feedback, and rapid resolution of conflicts. Employee morale is impacted by the promotion of creative idea exchange, the strengthening of professional ties, and clear

communication and teamwork. Employee happiness and productivity could be enhanced with prompt dispute resolution and regular feedback. A toxic work environment, according to Awan and Anjum (2015), may lead to poor employee behaviour and performance on the job if conflicts are not resolved. Employees are more likely to engage in harmful behaviour and communicate less effectively when disagreements go unresolved. The morale of the whole workforce may take a hit if one person acts inappropriately, which might reduce output. So says Dana (2018): "conflict is not merely an inconvenience." It costs money, and that money may be measured in terms of wasted time, bad choices, and employee turnover. When disagreements in healthcare are not handled properly, it may have serious consequences for patients' well-being and even their lives. The effects of industrial disputes, both external and internal to businesses, were studied by Akkerman and Torenvlied (2014). Using stratified random sampling, 300 questionnaires were delivered. The return was requested for 263 copies. For this data analysis, we used the Pearson correlation coefficient. The research showed that strikes, a kind of industrial dispute, influence two areas: (1) employee relations within the afflicted company and (2) collective bargaining outside of the immediate context of the focus companies.

Mbah and Ikemefuna (2012) looked at Total Nigeria Plc in Lagos State to see how satisfied workers were with their jobs and if they planned to leave. Distribution of questionnaires, interviews, and examination of historical records, pertinent literature, and

textbooks were all part of the authors' survey strategy to data collecting. We used the literature to generate four hypotheses, and we tested each one at the 0.05 level of significance. It was found that employees are less likely to plan to leave their jobs if they are satisfied with their current positions. Total Nigeria Plc's retention strategy includes a standardised compensation framework, an encouraging work environment, and effective supervision. Research by Abdulraheem and Adebola (2014) looked at what happens when faculty and staff leave universities in Nigeria. Using Kwara State University as an example, the qualitative approach relied on questionnaire-based structured interviews. The hypothesis was tested using the Pearson moment correlation. They came to the conclusion that if workers were more invested in their jobs and happier overall, turnover rates may go down.

In their 2013 study, Turkalj, Fosic, Dujak, and Strossmayer analysed methods for managing conflict in the workplace, looked at different perspectives on the topic, and created a graphic representation of the correlation between conflict levels and organisational success. Using a systematic questionnaire and secondary sources, they were able to gather their data. Pearson product-moment correlation and basic regression analysis were used to examine the hypothesis, while fundamental percentages were used to analyse the replies. The results showed that managers need to know how bad things are within the company in order to decide whether to help reduce tension or make things worse. Additionally, they came to the conclusion that managers and

employees need to distinguish between interpersonal disputes and those rooted in business matters, with the goal of maximising the latter and minimising the former. Empirical research was conducted in Nigeria by Hotepo, Asokere, Abdul-Azeez, and Ajemunogbohun (2010) to examine the impact of conflict on organisational performance. Researchers in this descriptive research surveyed 96 managers from several industries in the Lagos metropolitan region, including the aviation, road transport, and insurance industries. According to the findings, companies may experience both positive and negative outcomes as a consequence of conflicts caused by a lack of resources. When managed properly, however, the upsides may encourage creativity in the workplace and boost teamwork. Using an experimental survey, Tonder, Havenga, and Visagie (2008) investigated the causes and repercussions of conflict in South African public and private sector companies. A total of 200 workers from both companies were issued the survey. It is clear from the comparison that the two organisations' perspectives on the causes and effects of conflict are quite different from one another.

Methodology

The study's methodology was an ex post facto descriptive survey. Since the event that was being investigated had already taken place, this design was used. Eleven (11) secretaries from Osun State's Federal Polytechnic Ede made up the study's population. Methods for gathering primary data were used in this study. There was a standardised questionnaire in this study. The study's goals

were taken into account while creating the questionnaire. Respondents were able to more easily provide the researchers with the data they needed because of this. In order to examine the collected data, the researcher uses the standard deviation and the arithmetic mean. The researcher is able to draw conclusions about the many areas of interest based on the findings.

Presentation and Data Analysis

Research Question 1: What are the conflict management styles in an organisation

Table 1: Conflict management styles in an organisation

S/N	Item	Degree of Respondents				$\bar{X}$	Remarks
		SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1		
1.	Adaptation	13	10	15	8	2.7	Accepted
2.	Dominance	28	18	-	-	3.6	Accepted
3.	Compromise	22	24	-	-	3.5	Accepted
4.	Avoiding	26	20	-	-	3.6	Accepted
5.	Integration	40	6	-	-	3.9	Accepted
6.	The fight	30	16	-	-	3.6	Accepted
7.	Cooperativeness	40	6	-	-	3.9	Accepted

The analysis of conflict management styles in the organization in Table 1 reveals that integration and cooperativeness are the most accepted styles, with average scores of 3.9, indicating a preference for collaboration and mutual solutions, followed by dominance, avoiding, and the fight, all with average scores of 3.6, showing a tendency toward assertive

and sometimes evasive approaches, while adaptation, with an average score of 2.7, is the least preferred, suggesting a moderate acceptance of flexible responses to conflict.

Research Question 2: What are the influence of conflict management on job performance of secretaries in an organisation?

Table 2: Influence of conflict management on job performance of secretaries in an organisation

S/N	Item	Degree of Respondents				$\bar{X}$	Remarks
		SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1		
8.	It builds cooperation	15	19	8	4	2.9	Accepted
9.	Organisational innovativeness and productivity	34	12	-	-	3.8	Accepted
10.	Individual developments	11	15	8	12	2.7	Accepted
11.	Improving quality decisions	30	16	-	-	3.6	Accepted
12.	Conflict management skills	18	20	8	-	3.2	Accepted
13.	Stimulation of a search for new facts or resolutions	21	25	-	-	3.4	Accepted
14.	Increase in group cohesion and performance	10	13	15	8	2.6	Accepted

The table 2 above evaluates the impact of conflict management on secretaries' job performance, showing that organizational innovativeness and productivity (3.8) have the highest positive influence, followed by improving quality decisions (3.6) and conflict management skills (3.2). Building cooperation (2.9) and stimulating the search for new solutions (3.4) are also positively impacted. However, individual development

(2.7) and group cohesion (2.6) show moderate influence, with lower acceptance compared to other factors. Overall, conflict management significantly enhances job performance, particularly in decision-making and organizational productivity.

Research Question 3: What are the methods used in resolving conflicts in an organisation?

Table 3: Methods used in resolving conflicts in an organisation

S/N	Item	Degree of Respondents				$\bar{X}$	Remarks
		SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1		
15.	Improving organizational practices	19	27	-	-	3.5	Accepted
16.	Special roles and structure	13	13	10	10	2.5	Accepted
17.	Confrontation	15	21	10	-	3.1	Accepted
18.	Minimum authority	38	8	-	-	3.8	Accepted
19.	Altering communication	19	27	-	-	3.5	Accepted
20.	Changing reward system	20	17	5	4	3.1	Accepted
21.	Avoidance	20	26	-	-	3.4	Accepted
22.	Collaboration	39	07	-	-	3.9	Accepted
23.	Bargaining	20	16	6	4	3.1	Accepted
24.	Compromise	10	6	20	10	2.4	Rejected
25.	Power Play	12	21	5	8	2.8	Accepted

The table 3 above shows that collaboration (3.9) and minimum authority (3.8) are the most effective conflict resolution methods, while compromise (2.4) is the least favored. Methods like improving organizational practices (3.5) and altering communication (3.5) are also widely accepted. Other methods such as confrontation (3.1) and changing the reward system (3.1) are moderately accepted, whereas special roles and structure (2.5) and power play (2.8) have lower acceptance. Overall, collaborative and authority-

delegating strategies are seen as the most effective.

Discussion of Findings

The majority of respondents strongly supported dominance, avoidance, integration, confrontation, and cooperation as successful ways to conflict management, according to the company's study on conflict management styles. This is in line with what Stoica-Constantin (2011) says about the skills necessary for managers to effectively handle conflicts: the ability to argue and discuss,

accurately assess options or emotions, remain calm under pressure, and clearly state their position.

The majority of respondents in the study on the effect of conflict management on secretaries' productivity at work agreed that conflict encourages teamwork, personal growth, better decision-making, curiosity about and search for answers to problems, and overall cohesiveness and efficiency. This conclusion is in line with what Flerwood (2010) said: that secretaries must be able to recognise the origins of conflict, its positive and negative aspects, develop strategies for managing conflict, and know how to resolve conflicts successfully because conflict is inevitable.

Conflict resolution methods within an organisation were analysed and found to favour confrontation, avoidance, designated roles and structure, bargaining, compromise, power dynamics, and collaboration over enhancing organisational practices, minimising authority, and modifying communication. This conclusion is in line with what Rahim (2002) has said about the goal of conflict management methods: to design efficient macro-level solutions that reduce the negative effects of conflict while maximising its positive effects on learning and organisational performance.

Conclusions

Results show that leadership styles, competition for power, and a lack of shared resources are the root causes of workplace disputes. Because of this, morale drops, which in turn lowers productivity and quality of service. Therefore, it is critical to quickly determine the nature of the disagreement and

take into account all parties involved. The best way to resolve a conflict is by negotiation amongst the involved parties; resorting to force is never an option. Moreover, ending conflict entirely is not realistic. Those managers who try to avoid confrontation at all costs will fail miserably, while those who are able to manage it well often find both professional and personal success. Secretaries may benefit professionally and emotionally from conflicts if they are able to manage them well. Problems related to conflicts must be addressed. On the flip side, while each side struggles to find a solution, the process of trying to manage the dispute itself may provide a chance for personal development. Tensions may be reduced, misconceptions cleared up, problems addressed, and the organisation back to normal by verbal and nonverbal communication.

Recommendations

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

- 1) When the employees work together, they should strive not only to get along with each other, but also to be the best they can be in working for the organisation.
- 2) Working as a team is more effective hence every secretary should attempt to build team spirit in the office.
- 3) Boss and secretary should communicate openly and honestly.
- 4) Supervisor and secretary should give mutual support to one another in executing their roles in the work place, for the overall benefit of the organisation.

- 5) Organisations need to figure out how to get their message out to everyone in order to prevent rumour mongering.
- 6) Organisational employees should not be in a constant state of competitiveness with one another, but rather should be working in harmony and unity to accomplish a shared objective.
- 7) Management should use measures for conflict management that enhance organisational performance. This includes facilitating open lines of communication between management and employees and encouraging positive relationships among coworkers to raise morale.

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