



Conflict management styles and employee performance of selected federal Hospitals in Lagos

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Abstract

The study investigates conflict management styles and employee performance of selected federal hospitals in Lagos. The explanatory design was adopted to ascertain the relationships between the study's variables. The study adopted the purposive sampling technique to gather data from 200 staff of two Federal hospitals in Lagos. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences software version 21 was used in analyzing the data. The study found a significant relationship between the three conflict management style i.e., accommodating, integrating and avoiding and employee performance. The study discussed the practical implications for managerial and direction for future studies.

Keywords: Conflict management style, employee performance, federal Hospital, Lagos

Introduction

Conflicts are common occurrences in human societies which may be due to competition between people, groups or organisations striving to succeed, in most cases at the expense of the others, by eliminating the various obstacles that hold them back. Conflict as an obstacle, is an inescapable component of social life which pervades various organizational process (Tariq & Gardezi, 2023) [29]. Scholars and researchers have attempted to analyse how conflict management works in organisations since different organisations face different conflicts. Conflicts have different sources and can lead to positive or negative effects (Cai & Wohn, 2023; Jordan & Troth, 2021) [6, 14] and it has been mainly emphasized that the type of conflicts faced by the organisation can determine failure or success and conflict should be avoided at most (Kilag *et al.*, 2024) [16]. Folger *et al.* (2021) [9] asserted that conflict can ensue in any organization or industry either public or private. Federal hospitals in Nigeria have daunting task of managing conflict considering the incessant demands of patients. According to Folger *et al.* (2021) [9], conflict management depends on the kind of styles that suit the organisation and have an added advantage to the organisation in the long run. Conflict management is also seen as a wider concept which involves conflict management styles, process and skills to mitigating conflicts in a workplace (Furlong, 2020) [10]. Therefore, in order to know which style suits the conflict best, management should be able to have the right kind of skills to manage the conflicts which come about in the organisation. Ronquillo *et al.* (2023) [26] who studied the five different styles of conflict management aver that conflict management styles include dominating, compromising, integrating, avoidance and accommodation. The preference for one or another conflict management style over the other depends on certain factors which include the kind of conflict, position of the parties and the kind of the relationship (Liddle, 2023) [19]. Conflict is now a very common factor in organizations that leads to deterioration in performance because of human interactions in today's work environment (Belias *et al.*, 2023) [5]. Employee performance is affected when conflicts are many and this affects employee perform in the work environment. The conflicts usually affect the creativity and innovation, efficiency and

effectiveness of the employees, as there is also change in attitude and many others.

Hospitals in Nigeria and Federal hospitals are no exception is often seen in recent times engaged in series of conflicts. Doctors and Nurses including other staff often lay down their tools for either better working conditions such as pay rise or improvement in sufficient equipment to address the needs of the high number of patients who outweigh the number of doctor and nurses in the hospital

The growing frustrations has occasioned high exodus of health worker in the country. Management of the hospitals, in a bid to mitigate these conflicts, is assumed to apply different styles of conflict management which yield no meaningful results. However, studies have proven the positive effect of conflict management style on organizations' effectiveness and employees' performance. The question then is: How have conflict management styles led to employees' performance in the Federal hospitals in Nigeria?

Significance of the Study

The study should help the management of the hospitals on adopting conflict management styles suitable for the conflict situation in order to achieve a positive impact on employee performance. It is hoped that recommendations from the study should provide managers of the hospitals with practical solutions on how to management conflict using the appropriate styles. The outcome of the study should also be helpful to government policy makers. The study should be a valuable source of information to extant literature, scholars, students and researchers who might delve deep on the subject matter.

Delimitation

The study investigates conflict management styles and employee performance of Federal hospitals in Nigeria. The study therefore focused on the independent variable of conflict management styles of integrating, dominating, avoidance, compromising and accommodation and how they have an employee performance which is the dependent variable. Geographically, Lagos was chosen, considering that the state can boost of a substantial number of Federal hospitals in relations to other states

Literature Review

Concept and Definition of Conflict

Conflict has been studied over centuries by many great minds. But a more systematic study has been possible only since the twentieth century (Anastasiou, 2020) ^[2]. The emergence of political anthropology as a special branch of social anthropology, marked by the publication of "African Political Systems" (1940), edited by Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, that the study of conflict resolution became prominent. However, theoretical controversies over the subject of conflict and its resolution have survived a long history of the study. From the very outset, scholars do not agree upon whether conflict is a disjunctive process or sociation. Some scholars have contended that conflict has a divisive effect. For instance, Sipova (1989) considered conflict as an abnormal phenomenon. He used the term anomie or pathology to describe it. Similarly, Wilson & Kolb (1949, cited in Colser, 1964) believed that conflict has a disjunctive effect. Many other scholars have repudiated this view. Park and Burgess (1921) and Simmel (1955), cited in Colser (1964) argue that every interaction among men is a sociation, so is conflict. Conflict is a means to solve and avert complete fission, thereby preserve some kind of unity. Even though the term of conflict is ambiguous, and there are many different definitions of conflict, there is still no generally accepted one in the literature (Rahim, 2023) ^[23]. However, Marchetti & Tocci (2020) ^[20] define conflict as "a process in which one party perceives that its interest are being opposed or negatively affected by another party"

Employee Performance

Employee performance is one of the key factors in achieving organizational goals (Rivaldo & Nabella, 2023) ^[24]. Productive and efficient employees can help companies increase output and quality of products or services produced, increase customer and employee satisfaction (Kuswati 2020) ^[18], and build a positive reputation for the company. Employee performance is a measure of the extent to which an employee is able to fulfill his duties and responsibilities properly and effectively (Andreas, 2022) ^[3]. Employee performance can be measured based on work results, efficiency, work quality, initiative, and work attitude (Riyanto *et al.*, 2021) ^[25]. Good employee performance can help companies achieve organizational goals more effectively, while poor employee performance can cause losses for the company (Sitopu *et al.*, 2021) ^[27]. According to Paul & Bommu (2024) ^[21], improving employee performance is a major challenge for organizations in various sectors whilst poor employee performance can cause a company to lose customers, decrease productivity, and high operational costs.

Empirical Review of Literature on Accommodating Style and Employee Performance

Accommodating conflict management style is a cooperative and conciliatory approach to conflict resolution in which one party willingly gives up their own interests or positions in order to satisfy the interests or positions of the other party involved in the conflict (Kulesa *et al.*, 2023) ^[17]. The accommodating conflict management style both positively and negatively affects employee performance depending on the situation (Hussain *et al.*, 2023) ^[13]. On the positive side, accommodating can help maintain positive working

relationships among employees and with patients. In a service industry such as hospital, this may result in more patient retention and satisfaction. However, if accommodating is used too frequently or in situations where it is not appropriate, it can have negative effects on employee performance (Gunasingha *et al.*, 2023) ^[10]. This study proposes that accommodating style significantly influence employee performance. The study also proposes that accommodating style can be a positive approach to employee motivation. If an employee has a minor issue that is important to them but not critical to the overall success of the team or organization, accommodating can help build trust and maintain positive working relationships. Hence, the study hypothesizes that:

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between accommodating style and employee performance

Empirical Review of Literature on Integrating Style and Employee Performance

The integrating style of conflict management is a collaborative approach where both parties work together to find a mutually beneficial solution to their conflict (Chandolia & Anastasiou, 2020) ^[2, 7]. When it comes to the hospital industry, the integrating style of conflict management can have a significant impact on organizational effectiveness. By using this approach, hospitals can avoid costly legal battles and negative publicity that can damage their reputation (Zaghini *et al.*, 2020) ^[31]. There are some ways in which the integrating style of conflict management can positively impact organizations' effectiveness including improving patients relations, reducing employee turnover, avoiding legal costs, and enhancing employee performance (Liddle, 2023) ^[19]. This hypothesis suggests that using the integrating conflict management style can lead to a range of benefits that ultimately improve employee overall performance. By working collaboratively to find mutually beneficial solutions, employees working in a hospital can foster a positive work environment that promotes teamwork, productivity, and a strong organizational culture to enhance performance. The integrating conflict management style can have a positive impact on employee motivation thereby enhancing employee performance in several ways. This style emphasizes collaboration and mutual problem-solving, which may result in a happier workplace and more job satisfaction leading to high employee performance. Also, staff members are more likely to be inspired to work harder if they feel their issues are acknowledged and valued (Aseery *et al.*, 2023) ^[4]. Deducing from the literature, the study proposed as follows;

H2: There is a significant relationship between integrating style and employee performance

Empirical Review of Literature on Avoiding Style and Employee Performance

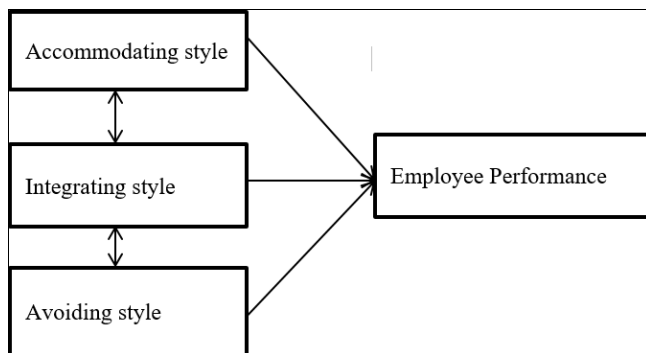
According to Kay & Skarlicki (2020) ^[15], avoiding conflict management style is a type of leadership style where a manager tends to avoid or ignore conflicts that arise within their team or organization, rather than addressing them directly. Managers who adopt this style tend to prioritize maintaining harmony and avoiding tension and discomfort, even if this means not fully addressing issues that may arise. Avoiding conflict management style can significantly impact the performance of employees in the hospital. In the hospital environment, where conflicts can have significant

reputational consequences, avoiding conflict can lead to unresolved issues, lack of accountability, and delays in decision-making (Jordan & Troth, 2021) ^[14]. This can ultimately impact the employees' performance and reputational damage. Additionally, avoiding conflict can hinder innovation and growth, as employees may be hesitant to suggest new ideas or take risks (Abou Ramdan & Eid, 2020) ^[1]. Avoiding conflict management style can significantly impact employee motivation. When managers avoid conflict, they tend to ignore or downplay issues, which can create a culture of ambiguity, uncertainty, and mistrust. This can lead to a decrease in employee motivation and job satisfaction, as employees may feel disengaged, undervalued, and unsupported (Suliman *et al.*, 2020) ^[28] affecting their performance. Hence, the study hypothesizes as follows

H3: There is no significant relationship between avoiding style and employee performance

Conceptual Framework

The Figure 1 demonstrates the framework that relates the concepts and the central themes of the study. The conceptual framework establishes the links between the independent variables (accommodating style, integrating style and avoiding style) and the dependent variable (employee performance)



Source: Authors' Construct 2024

Fig 1: Conceptual Framework

Methodology

Research Design

According to Sekaran (2000), a research design "is that which involves the planning of the actual location of the study, how to select the sample and collect data and how to analyse the data". The study's design is explanatory. Explanatory design helps a researcher to obtain information about a situation or problem in order to explain the relationship among variables; since the study intends to investigate the relationships between the stated variables, the adopted design is considered appropriate (Saunders *et al.*, 2009).

Population of the Study

Population is the entire group about which some information is required to be ascertained (Banerjee *et al.*, 2007). The population for this study consists of staff of two Federal hospitals in Lagos, Nigeria (Federal Medical Centre, Ebute-Meta, Lagos State and Federal Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital)

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Sampling is the processes of selecting units from a population of interest so that by studying the sample, we may fairly generalize our results back to the population from which they were chosen (Fowler, 2008). The study adopted the purposive sampling technique since Federal hospital staff in Lagos was the focus. Purposive sampling relies on the judgment of the researcher when it comes to selecting the units (e.g. people, cases/organizations, events, pieces of data,) that are to be studied. Usually, the sample being investigated is quite small, especially when compared with probability sampling techniques (Lund Research, 2012).

Sample Size

Sampling is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study (Kothari, 2004). Salant & Dillman (1994) also defined a sample as a set of respondents selected from a larger population for the purpose of a survey. The main reason to sample is to save time and money. As a result, a sample size of 200 staff of two Federal hospitals in Lagos (Federal Medical Centre, Ebute-Meta, Lagos State and Federal Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital) was purposefully selected. According to Kent (2007), a sample size of one hundred (100) is sufficient for quantitative research and since the sample size is above 200 which is far above 100, it is considered appropriate

Sources of Data

The source of data was largely primary, form the field with the use of questionnaires whilst secondary source came from journals and text books.

Distribution of Questionnaires

Questionnaire administration was carried by the researcher himself. It took approximately one (1) month to administer the questionnaire. Each respondent spent about 12 minutes in responding to the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

The study employed the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 for the data analysis. Presentations of the findings were tabulated and discussed with reference to existing studies to ensure easy understanding.

Validity and Reliability

Reliability suggests the degree to which measurements are conducted effectively. To ensure reliability, the Cronbach Alpha (α) was used. According to Devellis (2003), the Cronbach alpha coefficient should be above 0.7. Cronbach alpha values above 0.7 are acceptable and values that are above 0.8 are preferable. The validity of the study was also ensured by pre-testing the questionnaire.

Ethical Consideration

Ethics involves the codes of behaviour adopted by a researcher. It is also the moral principles that guide researchers to conduct research without deception or intention to harm the participants of the study. Polychronidou *et al.* (2014) also shared that the participants' volunteering rights and confidentiality must be of importance to the research process. Guiding by this principle, participants were encouraged to participate at will. Anonymity and confidentiality was ensured

Results and Discussion

Background Characteristics of Respondents

Out of the 200 staff who participated in the study, 120(60.0%) were females while 80(40.0%) were males. The findings are in tandem with prior studies GG

The age group 26-31 years was (15), 32-37 age group was (45), 38-43 age group were (50), 44-49 age group were (60) whilst 50 and above age group were (30) respectively. From the study, it is apparent that the age groups 44-49 years were fairly the majority

With respect to the participant job designations, 110(55.0%) were nurses, 15(7.5%) were medical doctors, 50(25.0%) were administrative staff, 15(7.5%) were dispensing technicians whilst 10(5.0%) were laboratory technicians. The findings show that the respondents hold different roles in the hospital with nurses being the majority. This was anticipated prior to the study.

Findings of the study revealed that with bachelor degree certificate were the majority (65), master degree holders (32), professional certificate holders (52) whilst others (51). From the study, the attainment of education was clear but with varied certificates. However, bachelor degree holders were the majority.

Regarding the years respondents have work in the hospital, 85 of the respondents have work for 1.3 years, 40 for 4-6 years, 30 for 7-9 years whilst 45 of the respondents have work for 10-13 years in the hospital. Findings show that respondents have enough working experience and their contributions to the study is regarded valuable

Test of Hypotheses

In testing the hypothesis of the study, the regression analysis was performed. The regression formula is represented in a mathematical form as $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \mu$. In order to ascertain the strength of the relationship, simple linear regression was used to test the hypotheses. In addition, Pearson correlation (also known as Pearson r) measures the strength of a relationship between two variables. The association can be measured on an interval scale or a ratio scale. Correlation values range between +1 (positive relationship) and -1 (negative relationship) inclusive, and the signs depict the direction of the relationship between the variables. Hence, Pearson correlation was used to analyze the three hypothesis of this study.

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between accommodating style and employee performance

The result from the linear regression analysis in revealed a significant positive relationship between accommodating style and employee performance ($\beta = .862$, $t = 48.082$, $p = 0.00$). This means that the effect of accommodating style resulted to an increase in employee performance. Hence, the predicted hypothesis, there is a significant positive relationship between accommodating style and employee performance was accepted. Findings of the study corroborate the findings of Hussain *et al.* (2023) [13]. In their study, the authors examined conflict resolution styles among nursing staff public sector hospitals. Accommodating style was found to be the leading conflict resolution style among nurses. In another study, Dahari (2023) [8] found accommodating conflict management style as one of the conflict management practice implemented by the Head of SMPIT consistent with prior studies

In the workplace environment, many people tend to choose this type of conflict management style as they believe that maintaining a good workplace relationship is more important than other things. This may due to the fact that people spend most of their time at work compare to at home, hence there is a need for a positive relationship among colleagues so that conflict can be minimized besides the need of friendship itself. Frequent use of accommodating style among nurses indicates the caring ideology, creating harmonious and seek for socialize environment where competition is rejected. Table 1 presents the findings

Table 1: Relationship between accommodating style and employee performance

Variables	B	R ²	T	F	P-values
AS->EP	.862	.784	48.082	1624.334	0.00

Note: N=200, P <.05, Adjusted R²= .784, AS and EP denote Accommodating Style and Employee Performance respectively

H2: there is a significant relationship between integrating style and employee performance

From the linear regression analysis in revealed a significant positive relationship between accommodating style and employee performance ($\beta = .688$, $t = 64.148$, $p = 0.00$). This means that the effect of integrating style resulted in an increase in employee performance. Hence, the predicted hypothesis, there is a significant relationship between integrating style and employee performance was accepted. In the study of Okai (2022), similar findings were made on nursing students in West End University College. Also, Yeboah (2021) found a significantly positive relationship between high emotional intelligence and usage of integrating conflict style of management.

Health workers might not want to relent in the resolve of their differences due to the severity nature of their job, to save lives. According to extant literature (Owusu, 2021; Takyi, 2020), integrating may be the best approach for resolving conflict when two people who live or work closely together need to solve a problem (such as agreement), when buy-in is needed from the other person (such as health workers saving the lives of patients) and, also when dealing with strategies for solving problems. Prior studies have shown that employees adopt the integrating approach to conflict with the objective of satisfying relationships (Putri & Hartono, 2023) [22]. Table 2 presents the findings.

Table 2: Relationship between integrating style and employee performance

Variables	B	R ²	T	F	P-values
IS->EP	.688	.824	64.148	2446.824	0.00

Note: N=200, P <.05, Adjusted R²= .824, as IS and EP denote Integrating Style and Employee Performance respectively

H3: There is no significant relationship between avoiding style and employee performance

The results of the statistics analysis demonstrate a significant positive relationship between avoiding style and employee performance ($\beta = .846$, $t = 24.184$, $p = 0.00$). This means that the effect of avoiding style resulted to an increase in employee performance. Hence, the predicted hypothesis, H3: there is no significant relationship between avoiding style and employee performance was rejected as we accept that significant relationship between avoiding

style and employee performance. Findings of the study support the findings of Guiab & Miguel (2023)^[11]. Guiab & Miguel (2023)^[11] found avoiding conflict style as the dominant conflict management style among university faculty members. However, literature indicates that frequent use of avoiding among nurses is because due to the sense of powerless over their superior even though avoiding is commonly known as producing unsuccessful result (Tehrani & Yamini, 2020)^[30]

Table 3: Relationship between avoiding style and employee performance

Variables	B	R ²	T	F	P-values
IS->EP	.846	.626	24.148	1842.644	.000

Note: N=200, P <.05, Adjusted R2=.626, as A.S and EP denote Avoiding Style and Employee Performance respectively

Conclusion

From the study, it be concluded that majority of the participants were females 120(60.0%) in the Federal hospitals in Lagos

The age group 26-31 years was (15), 32-37 age group was (45), 38-43 age group were (50), 44-The study concluded that the age groups 44-49 years were fairly the majority

Findings of the study showed that the respondents hold different roles in the hospital with nurses being the majority.

It can be concluded that the attainment of education was clear but with varied certificates However, participants with bachelor degree certificate were the majority (65)

The study shows that respondents have varied working experience in the Federal hospitals in Lagos with the least year being 7-9 years. It was concluded that respondents have enough working experience and their contributions to the study was regarded valuable.

Also, it was concluded that a significant positive relationship between accommodating style and employee performance

The study further found a significant relationship between integrating style and employee performance

Similarly, a significant relationship between avoiding style and employee performance was found

Managerial Implications

Conflict is an inevitable part of our lives. In organizations, specifically, different shared values and beliefs might lead to misunderstanding and create tension between all the employees. It is in the norm of various cultures worldwide that conflict must be avoided, however, if it is well-managed, conflicts too, can open new unexpected possibilities to the organizations.

Therefore, management needs to evaluate the conflict situation properly and take the necessary action in resolving it. It is imperative for managers not to jump to conclusion without proper evaluation. Also, management should not demonstrate any emotions they have toward the situation.

More so, management should avoid taking sides during conflict. Addressing the conflict on the basis of friendships must out of the situation. It is imperative for managers not to side with one individual or another during the conflict. This can create unnecessary hostility for those whose thoughts are being rejected. Managers must act as mediators in bringing the conflict to an end sooner than prolonging it Management should always stick to the facts and keep both parties focused on the main issue and objectives is key to

creating productive disagreements and finding satisfying resolutions. Where necessary, management may bring experts into the discussion, particularly if the conflict concerns a larger project involving multiple employees. Not only will this keep the disagreement more focused on the pressing issue, but it can also help management get to the relevant details more quickly.

Additionally, management should take into account cultural dimensions and their impact on management views. This is because management may see reasoning in their thinking however, cultural difference might project different meaning. Understanding the cultural variances of employees is paramount to management success in resolving conflict at the workplace

Direction for future Studies

The study investigates conflict management styles and employee performance of selected federal hospitals in Lagos. Only three of the conflict management style i.e., accommodating, integrating and avoiding were delineated. Future studies could be expanded to cover the other conflict management style to ascertain their relationships with employee performance. Also, other states, apart from Lagos could be focused.

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