

# CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES AND ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH IN MANUFACTURING ORGANIZATIONS - A STUDY OF MIKAP NIG LTD MAKURDI, BENUE STATE

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## ABSTRACT

*This study evaluates conflict resolution strategies and organizational growth in manufacturing organizations: A study of Mikap Nig Ltd. Participants comprised 65 employees selected through the use of stratified random sampling technique. Data were generated through the use of validated structured questionnaire. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to analyze data collected from the respondents. Employing multiple linear regression analysis through SPSS, the results of the empirical tests showed a significantly positive relationship between conflict resolution strategies (avoiding, accommodating, compromising, and collaborating) and organizational growth. Also, the result of the regression analysis indicated that compromising, and collaborating strategies displayed the highest significant positive correlation with organizational growth in Mikap Nig Ltd. In addition, study findings revealed that conflicts arose over multiple factors of organizational experiences based on economic and goal incompatibility orientations in the workplace. The study concluded that conflict was an unavoidable phenomenon in organizational life and it could contribute to or detract from organizational growth depending on the conflict resolution methods adopted in the organization.*

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Today, nearly all successful organizations, local and international level spend most of their time in resolving conflicts among its employees and other stakeholder such as customers, suppliers, legislative bodies, the government and its regulatory agencies, the task environment in which it does business, opinion leaders and other interest-based organizations and parties in negotiation on how to improve organizational growth and efficiency socially, ethically, economically and ecologically (Ogbor & Orishede, 2013). In order for us to understand the role of organizations in society, it is imperative that we know how organizations manage conflicts which arise from disparate and conflicting interest and demands from its various employees (Scott, 2013).

To understand the relationship between conflicts and the relevance of a stakeholder perspective in managing conflict, it is also imperative that we see organizations not only as rational entities consciously designed to produce goods and services by passive on looking employees and society, but more prominently as an arena where conflicts and competing interests are managed. Scott (2013) argue that organizational growth could be defined as a measure of organizational accomplishment with regards to the value it creates and deliver to internal as well as external customers. It is described as an action or realization considered in relation to how successful it is. Within any organization there are usually different positions and jobs. People occupying these positions have different perceptions, goals, thought and concerns.

It is difficult to conceptualize a society or an organization without inherent differences and contradictions and these leads to conflict. Conflict can be a serious problem in an organization. It can create organizational

climate that makes it nearly impossible for employees to work together. Kalins (2013) stated that although organizations are set up with some pre-defined goals and objectives, these can only be achieved when the diverse interests of the organization's employees are effectively managed. However, organizations can successfully produce their products or services over time while managed the different workers and their interests upon which they are founded.

Because conflicts is inevitable and unavoidable aspect of every day's life, power differences exists in organizations and that the effective use of power is indispensable to established objectives and to secure contribution of them. The pluralists see organization as a fragmented terrain on arena where each member has his or her own interests to pursue, using the organization as an instrument for the pursuance of individual interests. Conflicts theorists such as Alpher, Tjosvoid and Law (2000), Baron and Kozan (1997), Kuhn and Rahim (2018) and Wall and Callister (1995) have argued that much of the power generated by organizations is not placed in the service of achieving organizational growth but is used to perpetuate an exploitative system, to preserve class privilege and to secure narrow private gain. This line of argumentation resonates well among those who have observed the increasing disparity between the compensation to execute and pay level of rank and file employees and between expatriates and local employees and the extent to which certain ethnic groups remain in segregated jobs and lower-paying less secured jobs while more relevant strategic positions in both public and private enterprises are exclusively reserved for a particular ethnic group. It is on this basis that Perrow (2006) suggested that "organizations generate power, it is the inescapable accompaniment of the production of goods and services which comes in many

forms from many sources, it is contested and it is certainly used”.

Conflict is ever present in an organization as a result of conflicting goals and interests (Long 2019, Kuhn and Rahim (2008)). Conflict is a disagreement between employees and management or owners and workers in an organization (Ogbor & Orishede, 2013). It is struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values or goals (Ribinson, 1998). Conflict can be seen as a disagreement between employees and management or owners and workers in an organization (Ogbor & Orishede, 2013). It is against this background that this study examines conflict resolution strategies.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Businesses nowadays are operating in a turbulent environment where organizations are searching for measures that will allow them to improve their growth and competitive advantage. Economic challenges and political issues may occupy the center stage, but internal wrangling among staff; union demands for improved welfares, power tussle, and the myriads of corporate social responsibilities also impact greatly on organizational growth. In the face of these challenges many organizations have continued to blaze the trail.

Another analogy is that, over the last couple of years several unions have called their members out to strike over pay deals allegedly not honored. The timing of a strike could be one that may lead to disastrous consequences such as a poorly planned strike that could lead to the collapse of the business that these workers are pushing via the strike as put by Kamalet (2013). There have been a number of complaints from government owned enterprise in Benue State who have resolved to industrial actions like fencing, go slows, sit-ins and striking. In the recent times,

the University employees, in the leadership of their union leaders, have conducted several local and national strikes affecting the academic schedules. The causes of these strikes are conflicts between the employees and the government and or their management boards as indicated by Oduor (2012). The study looked at the use of avoidance strategy in the government enterprises and how it affects the organizational performance.

A wide divergence of opinion exists on the source and effect of conflicts on organizational performance and the effectiveness of the various strategies available for managing them. It has been argued that conflicts are signs of a vibrant organization while others contend it is destructive and capable of retarding stability and profitability of organizations. For instance Kehinde (2021), Okoth (2012); Tseveendorj (2018) affirmed that conflicts have an effect on organizational performance but do not tell whether the conflict resolution strategies have an effect on the organizational performance. It is under this backdrop that, this study evaluates conflict resolution strategies and organizational growth in manufacturing organizations.

## 2.1 Conceptual Framework

Conflict is endemic to all social life; it is an inevitable part of living because it is related to situations of scarce resources, division of functions, power relations and role-differentiation (Azamosa, 2004). Because of its ubiquity and pervasive nature, the concept has acquired a multitude of meanings and connotations presenting us with nothing short of a semantic jungle. With the absence of a comprehensive definition of conflict, various definitions have been offered by many researchers from multiple disciplines. Some of these have originated from disciplines such as psychology, behavioral sciences, sociology, communication and anthropology. Several

researchers such as Thomas (1976); Wall and Callister (1995); Vecchio (2000) and Rahim (2001) described conflict as a process. For instance, Thomas (1976) defined conflict as “the process which begins when one party perceives that the other is frustrated, or is about to frustrate, some concern of his.” Wall and Callister (1995) viewed conflict as “a process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party.”

Vecchio (2000) described conflict as “the process that results when one person (or a group of people) perceives that another person or group is frustrating, or about to frustrate an important concern.” Rahim (2001) looked at conflict as “an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement or dissonance within or between social entities. Jambrek and Penić, (2018) conceive conflict as a process of social interaction and a social situation, where interests and activities of participants (individuals or groups) actually, or apparently, confront, block and disable the realization of one party’s objectives. Drawing upon Donohue and Kolt (1992), conflict is defined as a situation in which interdependent people express (manifest or latent) differences in satisfying their individual needs or interests and they experience interference from each other in accomplishing these goals (Jambrek & Penić, 2018).

Conflict resolution involves implementing strategies to limit the negative aspects of conflict and to increase the positive aspects of conflict at a level equal to or higher than where the conflict is taking place, the aim of conflict resolution is to enhance learning and group outcomes (effectiveness or performance in organizational setting) (Rahim, 2002). It is not concerned with eliminating all conflict or avoiding conflict. Conflict management, as a concept, has been conventionally associated with conflict containment and settlement.

Conflict resolution is the practice of identifying and handling conflict in a sensible, fair, and efficient manner, it requires such skills as effective communicating, problem solving, and negotiating with a focus on interests (Gordon, 2004).

There are various styles that can be used to manage conflicts in organizations. Rahim (2002) argued that conflict resolution styles used by negotiators and found that those negotiators who use integrating (collaborating), obliging (accommodating) or avoiding style were more effective than those who use dominating (competing) style. Individuals who use integrative (collaborative style) conflict handling style experience lower level of work conflict and stress at job, but people using avoiding or dominating (competing) style were facing more conflicts and work stress (Friedman, Sisiomata & Chukwumeka, 2000).

Overall conflict resolution should aim at minimize affective conflicts at all levels, attain and maintain a moderate amount of substantive conflict, and use the appropriate conflict resolution strategy to effectively bring about the first two goals, and also to match the status and concerns of the two parties in conflict (Rahim, 2002). Conflict resolution strategies should satisfy certain criteria. These criteria are particularly useful for not only conflict management, but also decision making in management. The first criteria are organization learning and effectiveness. In order to attain this objective, conflict resolution strategies should be designed to enhance critical and innovative thinking to learn the process of diagnosis and intervention in the right problems.

The second criterion is the needs of stakeholders. Sometimes multiple parties are involved in a conflict in an organization and the challenge of conflict resolution would be to involve these parties in a problem-solving

process that will lead to collective learning and organizational effectiveness. Organizations should institutionalize the positions of employee advocate, customer and supplier advocate, as well as environmental and stockholder advocates. Ethics is noted to be the third criterion for conflict resolution strategies to be effective. A wise leader must behave ethically, and to do so the leader should be open to new information and be willing to change his or her mind. By the same token subordinates and other stakeholders have an ethical duty to speak out against the decisions of supervisors when consequences of these decisions are likely to be serious. Without an understanding of ethics, conflict cannot be handled" (A Azamosa, 2004; Hocker & Wilmot (1995) discuss several strategies of managing conflicts: (1) avoidance, (2) collaborating (3) Accommodating, (4) Compromising and (5) Competing.

This study argues that "avoidance" in some instances, be recognized as an active form of conflict resolution. That adopting avoidance as a method of conflict resolution can be an active method of team building demonstrated if the organization considers the staff. Their method of conflict resolution was avoidance; it gave them a common identity and a sense of unity (Gordon, 2004). Avoidance can simultaneously be detrimental in that conflicts are never resolved but also because it results in and could even be said to exacerbate (through the construction of an "anti-organization team") opposition to management that reduces even more the likelihood of conflict resolution (Simmons & Peterson, 2000). It is intended not to confront the conflict, and characterized by self-interest and a few other parties only, and under this strategy, the concerns of all parties considered and do not follow, then the attention a few individuals and production.

H<sub>0:1</sub> Conflict avoiding has no significant effect on organizational growth of Mikap Nig. Ltd.

A compromise conflict resolution style attempts to resolve a conflict by finding a middle ground. The compromise is considered a lose-lose strategy because, for each party to get something they want, they have to sacrifice something that they would prefer not to give up. Compromise is about a give-and-take where you win and lose simultaneously. A compromise would involve Eddie and Chase meeting half-way on which promotional campaign to choose - possibly splitting the total funds allotted for the campaign so that both a direct mail and infomercial can be used but on a smaller scale. A compromise might be the fastest way to solve this conflict so that Eddie and Chase can continue their working relationship in a cooperative and supportive manner. However, if splitting the funds will not be enough to support both campaigns, a compromise will be unlikely. Therefore, this study stated that:

H<sub>0:2</sub> there is no significant effect of compromising conflict on organizational growth of Mikap Nig. Ltd.

To meet the needs of the team, a team member may surrender his position. When the stakes are low, accommodating the needs of others can promote harmony and foster a productive work environment. However, long-term conflict can arise if more aggressive individuals take advantage of team members who don't act assertively. Effective leaders monitor their team environment and provide coaching and mentoring to members that enables them to function productively together without operating at the expense of others.

Another option for solving this conflict would be for Chase and Eddie to use

an accommodation conflict resolution style, whereby one party tries to end the conflict by giving in to the wishes of others. Eddie could decide to accommodate Chase because he has little interest in which promotional campaign they eventually implement. Perhaps Eddie is new to the marketing department and does not want to appear like he is not a team player in Chase's eyes. Those with a high need for approval tend to accommodate more. Beyond seeking approval, it also says to the other party that you are a reasonable person and willing to bend on your position. Perhaps you realize that you are wrong, and rather than clinging on stubbornly to your position, you show humility and admit your faults. Accommodation also has its disadvantages. Giving in too early can lead to bad decision making because the issues go, for the most part, unexamined. Many conflicts require time to discuss several possible solutions before choosing which one best solves the issue - accommodating is often done with little to no discussion of all potential solutions. Consequently, this study stated that:

H<sub>0:3</sub> Accommodating conflict has no significant effect on organizational growth of Mikap Nig. Ltd.

Collaboration is described as being a win/win agreement because both parties come out of the engagement completely satisfied with the resolution or outcome. It is an integrative process which may involve a synergy of ideas, beliefs, and feelings resulting in an optimal outcome. Stephen Covey highly acclaimed that win/win is a frame of mind and heart that constantly seeks mutual benefit in all human interactions. Win/Win means agreements or solutions are mutually beneficial, mutually satisfying. With a Win/Win solution, all parties feel good about the decision and feel committed to the action plan. Win/Win sees life as a cooperative, not a competitive arena.

Collaboration is not the same as cooperation, though these terms are often used interchangeably in literature regarding methods of effectively working together. Cooperation suggests that those involved choose to interact in a supportive and helpful manner. That in itself is not collaboration. Cooperation can be a dynamic in three of the Thomas-Kilmann conflict modes - collaborating, compromising and accommodating. It is not an element of the other two conflict styles - competing and avoiding. Therefore individuals may demonstrate cooperation when they are in the process of compromising to reach a "middle ground". One party may also cooperate when he/she chooses to acquiesce and accommodate to the desires of the other because the issue is not worth struggling over. Neither of these forms of cooperation are collaboration as the outcomes are not win/win. Subsequently, this study stated that:

H<sub>0:4</sub> there is no significant effect of collaborating conflict resolution on organizational growth of Mikap Nig. Ltd.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study adopted contingency theory as the main pillar to which this study is anchored upon. Derr (1975) opined that contingency theory is one of the conceptual tools useful for managing organizational conflicts. He stated that there are three conflict resolution approaches from which intervener can draw to formulate an approach appropriate for resolving a dispute; Collaboration, Bargaining and Power Play. The appropriate use of these methods depends on the individual and organizational state. *Collaboration* involves people surfacing their differences (get them out in the open) and the work on the problems until they have attained mutually satisfactory solutions. This approach assumes that people will be motivated to expend the time and

energy for such problem-solving activity. *Bargaining* on the other hand assumes that neither party will emerge satisfied from the confrontation but that both, through negotiation, can get something they do not have at the start, or more of something they need, usually by giving up something of lesser importance. One party generally wins more than the other; by the skillful use of tactical trades, he can get the maximum possible from the other side. Third approach is *Power Play*, which differs from the other two approaches because its emphasis is on self-interest. Whereas, in collaboration and bargaining the two sides come together to try to resolve their problems, when power is the dominant mode, the actions are unilateral or in coalitions acting unilaterally.

### 2.3 Empirical Studies

Hotepo, Asokere, Abdul-Azeez and Ajemuigbolohun (2010) investigate the effect of organizational conflict on organizational performance. The study employs descriptive research design and uses questionnaire to collect data from 96 managers in some selected Airlines, Road Transport and Insurance companies in Lagos Metropolis. The research revealed that limited resources is the major cause of conflict and that conflicts have both negative and positive effects on organization, but when managed properly, the positive effects can be used to encourage organizational innovativeness and build cooperation among the employees.

Uchendu, Anijaobi-Idem and Odigwe (2013) examined the relationship that exists between principals' conflict resolution and organizational performance in Cross River State, Nigeria. The authors employed questionnaire to gather their data. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis was used in analyzing the data. The result of the analysis revealed that, there is a

significant relationship between principals' conflict resolution in terms of teacher-teacher conflict (TTC), teacher-student conflict (TSC), principal-teacher conflict (PTC) and organizational performance.

Adomi and Anie (2006) investigate the pattern of conflict resolution in Nigerian libraries. The researchers employed descriptive design and questionnaire to collect data from professional and para-professional staff of three Nigerian University libraries. Majority of the respondents perceive conflict as positive and can be stimulated by library managers. The study further found out that *interpersonal conflicts* are the dominant conflicts in Nigerian libraries, and *accommodation* ranks highest as technique of conflict avoidance.

Kazimoto (2013) analyzed the elements of a conflict resolution process and leadership organizational change and the benefits of managing conflict. The author concludes that leadership approaches are the key important factors for conflict management. The study recommends that managers in various organizations should encourage open communication policy, so that all employees get the right information at the right time.

Buyese and Verbeke (2013) examined the relationship conflict has a greater impact on learning performance than does process conflict. The effects of dysfunctional conflict on learning performance in a Chinese cultural context were explored with cognitive style as a moderator. The results of their analysis show that the relationship between process conflict and learning performance is quadratic. In addition, it was discovered that relationship conflict has a greater effect on learning performance than those process conflict. Mukolwe, Korir, Eliza, Milka, and Musyoki (2014) investigated the effect of interpersonal conflict on organizational performance of

selected hotels in Kisii town. The study employed both descriptive survey and explanatory research designs and targeted a population of 368 employees of purposively selected hotels. The data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics while multiple regressions were used to test the hypotheses. The results indicated that interpersonal conflict strategies, relationship conflict and task conflict significantly affect organizational performance respectively, while outcomes of interpersonal conflict does not significantly affect organizational performance.

### 3.1 Research Methodology

The study adopted survey research design since the approach was to identify attributes of a large population that is cost effective. The study population comprises of 68 employees from Mikap Nig. Ltd. Makurdi Benue State. Population census was adopted given the small number of employees from

the investigated firm. Primary data with the use of structured questionnaire for data collection which was design in five likert scale ranging 5 strongly agreed and 1 strongly disagreed. The overriding objective for the use of questionnaire was to translate the researcher's information into a set of specific statements that respondents could able answer to aid test of hypothesis. This process was simple for the researcher to administer the questionnaire and it was time saving and a lot of information was collected within a short period of time. The reliability and validity of the instruments and data was established following a pre-test procedure of the instruments before their use with actual research respondents. After cleaning and editing of data, coding was done in the statistical software. The statistical software used to analyze this data was Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) due to its ease of usage and to communicate the research findings.

### 4.1 Data Analysis

**Table 1 Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
CONAVOID	169	8.00	40.00	25.0059	.52666	6.84653	-.528	.187	.447	.371
CONACCOM	169	12.00	39.00	24.5621	.45600	5.92794	.208	.187	.086	.371
CONCOM	169	8.00	37.00	25.3432	.54710	7.11224	-.478	.187	-.180	.371
CONCOL	169	8.00	40.00	25.5740	.53371	6.93822	-.813	.187	.274	.371
AG	169	6.00	27.00	17.0710	.38549	5.01138	-.229	.187	-.492	.371
Valid N (listwise)	169									

Source: SPSS Output, (2021)



From the result of table 1 descriptive statistics, the mean of each variable reflected that CONAVOID was 25.0059, CONACCOM was 24.5621, CONCOM was 25.3432, CONCOL was 25.5740 and AG was 17.0710. The table 1 also reflected standard deviation for the variables as 6.84653, 5.92794, 7.11224, 6.93822 and 5.01138. The Skewness of CONAVOID was -0.528, CONACCOM was

0.208, CONCOM was -0.478, CONCOL was -0.813 and AG was -0.229. The table also reflected their Kurtosis as 0.447, 0.086, -0.180, 0.274 and -0.492. The Minimum Statistic for CONAVOID was 8.00, CONACCOM was 12.00, CONCOL was 8.00, CONCOM was 8.00 and AG was 6.00; while their Maximum Statistic was 40.00, 39.00, 37.00, 40.00 and 27.00.

**Table 2 Standardized Coefficients of Organizational Growth**

R <sup>2</sup>	0.804	Decision Rule		
R <sup>2</sup> adjusted	0.803			
Sig	0.000			
Variable	Standardized Coefficients	t-value	Sig	
CONAVOID	0.361	4.420	0.000	Rejected
CONACCOM	0.230	2.551	0.012	Rejected
CONCOM	0.104	3.243	0.000	Rejected
CONCOL	0.897	8.133	0.000	Rejected

*Source: SPSS Output, (2021)*

From table 2 the R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.804 indicated that the four dimensions of conflict resolution strategies (avoiding conflict, accommodating conflict, compromising conflict and collaborating conflict account for 80.4% of variations in the organizational growth of Mikap Nig Ltd while 19.6% was accounted by factors outside this study. This implies conflict resolution strategies were the main determinant of organizational growth in Mikap Nig Ltd as demonstrated from the findings. The table 2 also indicated that CONAVOID had Standardized Coefficients was 0.361, t-value was 4.420 and Sig-value was 0.000. CONACCOM had Standardized Coefficients of 0.230, t-value was 2.551 and Sig-value was 0.012. CONCOM had Standardized Coefficients of 0.104, t-value was 3.243 and Sig-value was 0.000 and CONCOL had Standardized Coefficients of 0.897, t-value was 8.133 and Sig-value was 0.000. It is appears that all conflict resolution strategic dimensions had significant positive effect on organizational growth.

#### 4.2 Discussion of Findings

This study contributes to the understanding of conflict resolution strategies and organizational growth in a manufacturing organization in Makurdi. It was revealed that conflict avoiding has significant effect on organizational growth in Mikap Nig Ltd. The finding is consistent with

Best (2017) who argue that conflict avoidance entails the process of reducing the destructive capacity of conflict through a number of measures and approaches by engaging with groups in order to reduce conflict tendencies. Kazimoto (2013) argued that the usage of conflict resolution indicates that, in reality conflict is inevitable.

It was also revealed that conflict compromising strategy had significant effect on organizational growth in Mikap Nig Ltd. The finding is line with Vigil and King (2000) who observed that the use of integrative

(compromising and collaborating) style of managing conflict is likely to create better result and higher commitment in individuals than teams using non-integrative conflict management. Compromising strategy encourages give and take condition which focuses on fulfilling each group's concern (Thomas, Thomas & Schaubhut, 2018). The parties concerned are willing to settle their differences harmoniously without considering anyone as a winner or beaten. Spaho (2013) opined that compromising entails reaching an agreement amongst individuals or groups concerned in the dispute that has common interest. It is appropriate when parties involved are committed absolutely to mutual actions and also have equal supremacies. This implies that conflict compromising resolution strategy is adequate in addressing interpersonal conflict in cases that it benefits all the conflicting individuals. The compromise tactic should be employed when objectives and goals are crucial but not necessitating the resources or possible disturbance of methods that are more assertive

The study has postulated a positive significant link between accommodating conflict resolution strategy and organizational growth in Mikap Nig Ltd. This position is in affirmation with previous finding of Mugal and Khan (2013) as re-affirmed by the study hypothesis that, regression analysis indicated that accommodating strategy displayed the highest significant positive correlation with organizational performance. The finding also agrees with the findings by Olu and Dupe (2012) which revealed that efficiency in conflict management enhanced performance of employees and that conflict resolution system of an organization may influence the performance of employee in the organization. Additionally, the findings are in agreement with Schermerhorn (2020) who argued that the competing approach includes application of various kinds of power including force to control and/or dictate the opposing party or

individuals so as to put pressure on the party to agree to own standpoint.

### 4.3 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded in general that Mikap management use approaches such as avoiding, accommodating, compromising and collaborating at different degrees. The approaches have significant on organizational growth in Mikap Nig Ltd. Mikap management ought to make sure of clear policies in conflict resolution strategies and settlement which both internal and external stakeholders can be manage effectively. Managers at Mikap should adopt strategy or strategies based on the nature and type of conflict. They should also bear in mind that irrespective of the challenges conflict may pose on organization, the focus should always be on proper management that will lead to functional outcome, conflict resolution is a laudable predictor of organizational growth therefore, every company should focus on constructive conflict resolution which will bring about employee engagement that will in turn influence organizational growth. The study also recommended that Mikap management can come up with different but appropriate strategies that will bring about resolutions and management of conflicts as they arise before they grow to greater level in the organization.

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