

An appraisal of the relevance of consultation in organisational conflict management

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ABSTRACT

Conflict has been proven to be inescapable in the work environment because of the composite nature of organizations. The study on the Appraisal of the Relevance of Consultation in Organisational Conflict Management evaluated the relationship of consultation with conflict management in an organization. Deploying consultation strategies in conflict management douses the degree of impact and incidence of escalated conflict. The study administered a questionnaire to 200 respondents from Banking & Fintech, Manufacturing, Professional Institutes, Ministries, Departments and Agencies of Government, Telecommunication, and Oil & Gas sectors in Southwest Nigeria through Google Forms, while 177 responded. A questionnaire was designed and validated by Industrial and Labour Relations Experts before administering it. Data were analyzed using charts, tabulations, percentages, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) methods. Findings confirmed that relationships exist between conflict management and consultation as a form of social dialogue. Most respondents agreed in strong and mild terms that deploying social dialogue in conflict management can trim down conflict; facilitate collaboration; replace confrontational relationships; establish a harmonious industrial climate; and open and encourage channels for consensus building. Since conflict is an intrinsic feature of organizational relations, sustaining a mutual relationship requires a deliberate commitment to adopt conflict management strategies. Social dialogue through consultation proved to be a potent apparatus for promoting effective conflict management. This highlights the need for organizations to prioritize consultation as a strategic approach to conflict resolution, ensuring harmony and collaboration across workplace dynamics. Hence, it is recommended that consultation should be deployed as a procedure to manage conflict in an organization.

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Introduction

Organisational environments undoubtedly are a miniature of a larger society, composite with the dynamic landscape consisting of personalities of varied backgrounds, values, views, desires, and contending interests. Managing people in organisations today is becoming more challenging than ever because of the collections and presence of multi-generational cohorts with dynamic interests and mindsets. Differential and overlapping interests of these groups and personalities in an organisation in most cases instigate conflict. According to Rahim (2023), conflicts can occur when the interests of social partners collide over goals, demands on scarce resources, and so on. It can therefore be inferred that conflicts originate from a plethora of sources found at group, personal, and organisational levels in institutions. Relatedly, Kamrul and Rezaul (2017) conceptualized that when there is an interjection of social partners' interests with the organizational goals, individual ambitions, group dynamics, loyalties, and demands on inadequate resources, there is the likelihood that conflict will evolve.

Bodunde and Bello (2024) opined that the modern nature of the work setting is undergoing significant transformations as a result of globalization, technological advancements, the presence of multi-generational cohorts, and shifting demographic patterns, which have led to increased diversity, flexible work initiatives, and a more unified global workforce. These alterations have intensified the new challenges in communication, collaboration, demands, and conflict within organizations. Edime (2022) viewed those conflicts,

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regardless of their origins—be it relational differences, operational demands, or gender-based issues, or between union and management—are expected in any organisation. The consequences of unmitigated conflicts could be devastating for an organisation; as such, there should be procedures to be exerted to prevent or minimize incidences of conflict escalation in an organisation. This process is referred to as conflict management.

The concept of conflict management is growing in prominence to address the evolving needs and expectations of a varied workforce and ensure that conflict, instead of advancing its negativity, becomes an opportunity for growth and revolution. Deductive from the literature reviewed is that the high-performance workplace emphasizes conflict management as a basis for effective high-performance and that conflict management in an organisation requires an understanding of the dynamics of communication, collaboration, and resolution within organisational structures regardless of the actors.

Pender (2017) averred that all forms of consultation, negotiation, and exchange of information among employers and employees, as well as representatives of governments, on matters of shared interest connecting to economic and social policy, are included in the description of social dialogue. Adetola and Ajadi (2021) ascribed that the process of arriving at a compromise while endeavoring to proffer solutions to grievances often involves disagreement and contradictions of opinions and views. These contradictions in most cases degenerate into conflict if the process is not well managed, and the consequences could lead to disruptions in the work process and eventually endanger the corporate success of an organisation.

Consultation is a critical instrument in the organisational conflict management process as it enables interaction, understanding, and collaboration between parties in conflict. Ojo and Abolade (2020) described the consultation as a meeting between employees and employers where their rapport does not bother with terms of negotiating strength but relates to their respective values and acumen to contribute to the resolution of the issue at stake. When conflicting parties are engaged in consultation and are part of the process leading to the outcome, there is a tendency that commitment to the outcome will be guaranteed. Consultation fosters a coordinated platform for open discussion that will trigger the exchange of information and insights into the concerns and views of parties, as well as the basis of the conflict.

Roark and Wilkinson (1979) inferred that consultation is a form of conflict resolution and is distinct from other methods such as control, negotiation, settlement, compromise, and avoidance. Walton (1969) stated that the general purpose of consultation is to curb conflict by exchanging benevolent drives for self-preserving malevolence. Deductive from this assertion, prompt intervention in conflict through consultation can limit its escalation. Walton, (1969) also averred that the totality of consultation involves initial conversion among the conflicting parties, shaping the perspective of the conflict, intervening in the conflict, and planning for imminent dialogue.

Unlike avoidance, which seeks to delay resolution, or control methods that suppress conflicts without addressing their roots, consultation prioritizes inclusive dialogue and mutual understanding. Negotiation, while focused on achieving agreement, often emphasizes bargaining power over shared solutions, unlike consultation, which engages all parties equally to build trust and sustainable outcomes.

According to Schilling-Vacaflor and Flemmer (2013), consultation is commonly considered an instrument for conflict deterrence and resolution because of its propensity to dissipate the fears and concerns of conflicting parties through engagement in a more democratic, peaceful, and sustainable way. Consultation instigates a joint approach to problem-solving and decision-making procedures. It enables the conflicting parties to contribute to the solution process, which invariably will lead to mutually agreeable outcomes. During consultation, underlying issues and concerns are identified and clarified. This clarification grants parties the opportunity to concentrate on solving the actual conflict rather than embroiling in superficial arguments.

A well-thought-out consultation procedure presents a reliable atmosphere for dialogue that enables parties to express their concerns without fear of vengeance or outbursts. Consultation promotes understanding and empathy, reduces tensions, and simplifies the process for conflicting parties to reach a compromise. It also builds trust and facilitates conflicting parties transitioning from a confrontational bearing to a cooperative stance, thereby guaranteeing the possibility of attaining a resolution that is satisfactory and beneficial to all involved.

The International Labour Organization (ILO, 1999 & 2018) provided that social dialogue covers all forms of negotiation, consultation, and exchange of information between or among representatives of governments, employers, and workers on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy. Given the foregoing, the place of consultation in conflict management cannot be undermined, as the efficacy of other forms of social dialogue hinges on the effectiveness and efficiency of consultation. Negotiation cannot take place without prior discussions among the social partners, nor can information be exchanged without a background understanding of the parties' requirements. Expectations and requirements are often revealed during consultation processes, making it foundational to other conflict resolution methods.

Conflict management in an organization is an essential endeavor germane to sustaining industrial peace and efficiency in a workplace. The use of conventional conflict management methods that underpinned unilateral decision-making by management and their directives from top to bottom is fast losing its potency in resolving conflict. Contemporary literature is stressing the increasing relevance and importance of consultation processes in managing conflicts successfully. Also, studies are emphasizing the need to understand all the intricacies of how consultation influences the outcomes of imminent conflicts. Consultation, which involves

dialogues and collaborations between or amongst social partners, is postulated to be a prospective transformative method to palliate conflicts in workplaces.

Rahim and Bonoma (2021) observed that deploying consultation processes considerably improves the quality of conflict resolution as it fosters shared understanding and collaboration among parties in conflicts. Relatedly, a study conducted by Nannan and Guobin (2020) found that organizations that deploy consultative approaches to conflict management enjoy greater levels of employee satisfaction, collaboration, and organizational performance.

Regardless of this awareness, the gap in understanding the proven realism of the significance of consultation in various organizational settings, predominantly in terms of its effectiveness compared to other forms of conflict management still subsists.

Sequel to the foregoing, this study appraised the relevance of consultation in organizational conflict management by exploring its efficacy, comparing it with conventional practices, and assessing its consequences for organizational outcomes. By addressing these gaps, the study will enhance a thorough understanding of how consultation can be leveraged to improve conflict management procedures and overall organizational strength.

The study responded to the below research question: *How does consultation support conflict management in an organisation?*

The objective of this study is to appraise how consultation supports conflict management in an organisation.

The hypothesis formulated for this research is: *No significant relationship exists between consultation and organizational conflict management.*

The scope of the study was to explore the roles of consultation in organizational conflict management. Various categories of employees from different sectors were selected in organizations in southwest Nigeria. The choice of location and method was premised on the accessibility of the respondents on the social media handles, SMS, and e-mails.

Literature Review

Theoretical and Conceptual Background

Conflict

Conflict is generally perceived as a relational dispute between two or more parties. ILO, (2018) postulated that conflict is a disagreement between two or more parties. Where the disputing parties are labour and management, it is referred to as an industrial conflict or a labour dispute. Organizational conflict is a disagreement or opposition between or among individuals (workers and or management) teams. It may manifest as employment conflict, labour-management conflict, or conflict between two or more employees. Trade Dispute Act (1990) described conflict as a form of disagreement between employers and employees or amid employees that is related to employment or non-employment and terms of engagement of any persons. Rahim (2023) inferred that the collision of the interests of social partners resulting from divergence in organizational goals, personal ambition, demands on scarce resources, etc, often triggers conflict. According to Akpor-Robaro & Oginni, (2018)), the phenomenon of industrial conflict breeds out of the necessity of the individual human being.

Therefore, conflicts originate from a multitude of sources found at personal and organizational levels in institutions. Scannell (2020) viewed that conflict evolves because of goals overlapping, differential in desires, interests, and views in an atmosphere where social partners are concerned mainly about selves' interests. Whenever intentions and purposes are misconstrued about an issue especially when bothering on common goals and appears to be interfering with achieving individual goals within the organization, conflict is imminent. CIPD, (2023), inferred that the destructive outcomes of conflict on employees and organisation can be numerous and varied, whereas many employees may not display cases or state the impact on them.

Conflict Management

Wallace (2019) viewed conflict management as a process of limiting the negative aspects of conflict while increasing the positive aspects of conflict. Kamrul and Rezaul (2017) conceptualized conflict management as a practice of being able to identify and manage conflicts reasonably and efficiently to improve learning and group outcomes, including effectiveness in organizational settings. Conflict management relies on the principle that all conflicts cannot automatically be resolved but gaining insight on how to manage conflicts can diminish the probability of non-productive escalation. Adeyemi (2010) viewed conflict management as a dynamic process that requires strategies that include negotiation, competition, win-win approach, accommodation, collaboration, avoidance, compromise, problem-solving, and communication. According to Ojo & Abolade, (2020), effective conflict management improves employee performance in an organisation and an organization's conflict management technique impacts employee performance in the organisation.

Consultation

Consultation is a process by which the social partners share information and engage in more profound discourse on conflictual issues. ILO, (2018) described consultation as one of the forms of social dialogue. Whereas social dialogue covers all forms of negotiation,

consultation, and exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers, and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy. Okuthe (2022) ascribed that consultation as a means of social dialogue is a vital instrument in dispute resolution and that the dominant objective is to engage in mutual relationships that will enhance effective communication. International Organization of Employers, Geneva, (2003), report on Social Dialogue and Tripartism, affirmed that consultation is one of the procedures of social dialogue. Matheson (2013) ascribed consultation as one of the forms of social dialogue and inferred that during a consultation, information is shared and discussed, but one party retains the right to make the final decision e.g., workers can express an opinion, but management makes the decision. Consultation may be direct or indirect. It is direct when parties involved engage in deliberation over the issue in conflict and it is indirect when discussions are done through representative bodies and/or committees.

Consultation can be formalized through joint consultative committees and similar bodies.

Ishola and Kalejaiye (2019) stated that the goal of social dialogue is to promote harmonious building and democratic participation of the stakeholders in the organization and consultation plays a prominent role in the process as it ensures that the voices of parties are heard in decisions affecting them. Industrial conflict inclines to be harmoniously settled without resulting in industrial action when consultation is deployed. Fajana and Shadare (2012) postulated that joint consultation is a two-way communication method deployed for resolving conflict resulting from issues of shared concern. Instead of simply passing information, management ventures to hunt for the opinions of the employees on the plan of management to introduce some procedural changes. Employees' contributions are harvested and may be used during the decision-making process.

Deductive from the literature reviewed are some significant roles of consultation in managing conflict in an organization which include: fostering reciprocity of respect among parties involved in the conflict; guaranteeing peaceable resolution of imminent conflicts; ensuring employees' loyalty, collaboration, and organizational efficiency; enabling employees to advance the enhancement of terms and conditions of employment; providing job satisfaction, motivation and self-accomplishment; guaranteeing more job and pay security; and activating respect for the capacities of employees as would be recognized by the management.

Theoretical Review

The theories of conflict reviewed thus far fundamentally underscored three critical elements: humans are self-absorbed; there is always perpetual resource scarcity; and conflict is inevitable within and between relational parties. This study therefore anchored its discourse on four of the numerous theories that highlighted the above elements.

Marxist Structural Conflict Theory

The fundamental concepts of Marxist Structural Conflict Theory were established by Karl Marx in the middle of the 19th century, especially in his writings *Das Kapital* (1867) and *The Communist Manifesto* (1848). Although class conflict and capitalism were the main topics of Marx's early publications, neo-Marxist academics and social theorists' contributions during the 20th century helped to develop the theory as it applied to larger social structures, such as organizations.

Based on Karl Marx's writings, Marxist Structural Conflict Theory highlights that social systems inherently and inevitably involve conflict because of the unequal distribution of power and wealth. According to the idea, there are two main classes in society: the bourgeoisie, or owners of production, and the proletariat, or workers, whose interests are essentially at odds. Tension, rivalry, and eventually conflict are fostered by this economic and social inequality. Marx maintained that this kind of conflict results from the ruling class's exploitation of the working class, which is sustained by institutions and social structures intended to uphold the status quo and consolidate power.

According to this theory, which goes beyond class conflicts to examine larger social, political, and organizational contexts, systemic injustices give rise to disputes that call for structural solutions. Marxist theorists contend that resolving conflicts in a meaningful way requires tackling the underlying causes of inequality as opposed to its symptoms. Pertinence to Consultation in the Management of Organizational Conflict, Marxist Structural Conflict Theory offers a useful perspective for comprehending conflicts in the workplace within the framework of the study "An Appraisal of the Relevance of Consultation in Organizational Conflict Management". Power disparities and conflicting interests among staff, management, and stakeholders cause conflict in modern businesses, which frequently mirror microcosms of social structures. To resolve these issues, the study emphasizes the importance of consultation.

Marxists view consultation as a democratic method of resolving disputes that promotes communication and inclusivity. Consultation promotes egalitarian decision-making processes and undermines hierarchical power dynamics by involving all participants. This supports the idea that to reduce conflict, systemic change is necessary. By transforming adversarial relationships into cooperative ones, effective consulting can help businesses address the structural root causes of conflict and create a peaceful workplace. As a result, consultation turns into a useful instrument for balancing conflicting interests and promoting organizational justice.

Covington, (1994) accepted Marxism postulations, that conflict can occur, nevertheless it would be of small significance compared to the general need for consensus and stability. Covington, (1994) further viewed that conflict that occurs is seen as transient and neutralized, as improvement prevails in the society. In consultations during conflict management, understanding this theory may assist in recognizing how organizational structures may influence conflicts and what form of structural changes would be required to resolve conflict arising from structural deficit syndrome.

Donald Campbell's Realistic Conflict Theory

This theory evolved in 1965 and believed that conflicts arise when parties contend for limited resources. The theory illustrated how perceived competition for inadequate resources can trigger hostility between individuals or groups. Other researchers that have supported this theory include Jackson, Jay W (1993), Brief, Arthur P.; et al (2005), Baumeister, R.F. and Vohs, K.D. (2007), Whitley, B.E. and Kite, M.E. (2010). They all shared the same views that parties' hostilities can rise consequent to differing goals and contests over limited resources. In consultations, having understood these views can enable insight into conflicts arising due to competition for limited resources. It is also possible that parties may compete for a genuine or sensed scarcity of resources. During consultation, the real angle to the competition will be made manifest.

The Game Theory

The Game Theory pioneered by Ernst Zermelo (1913) attracted other contributors like John von Neumann (1928); John Nash (1950-51) and Lloyd Shapley (1953) and echoed by Giacomo Bonanno (2018) in his Game Theory-2nd Edition. The theory provides a formal language for the representation and deals with strategic interactions that involve individuals or entities called play-actors to make decisions that the outcomes depend on the actions of all the players involved. During consultations while attempting to manage conflict, the strategy in this theory can be used to design strategies that anticipate the moves of other parties and encourage collaborative outcomes. The personality of the players differs depending on the context in which the game theoretic semantic is invoked.

The interest-Based Relational (IBR) Approach

The interest-Based Relational (IBR) Approach credited to Roger Fisher and William Ury (1991) focused on identifying the interests behind the positions of conflicting parties. The theory has been adjudged to have had a significant impact on the field of conflict resolution, negotiation, and mediation. It is acknowledged that in conflict negotiation is often interest-based and largely influenced by selves' interests. Thus, in consultations, acquaintance with this concept can help move dialogues from positional bargaining to exploring inherent interests and steering collaborative and sustainable solutions. Understanding and employing this theory in consultation can help practitioners diagnose conflicts more precisely and initiate effective strategies for resolution, fostering healthful organizational environments and relationships.

Empirical Reviews

Research carried out by Okuthe (2022) determines the importance of dialogue in conflict management for an organization's effectiveness and the extent to which dialogue has been used successfully to promote organisational efficiency. The researcher used the descriptive research design. Findings revealed that dialogue proved to be a viable instrument in conflict management and a tool for peacebuilding and reconciliation processes. The study stressed that consultation as an element of social dialogue proved to be an enabler for social partners to perform optimally. Through consultation, participants collaborate to seek a common understanding of issues in conflict.

In a study conducted by Kalejaiye and Ishola (2019) to examine social dialogue as a tool for resolving industrial conflict at Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos, Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to examine the use of social dialogue as an instrument for conflict resolution at the University. In-depth interview with some key informants on some rational issues on social dialogue and industrial conflict at the University was deployed. Findings showed that the management of the University often deployed the use of a committee structure that allowed the spirit of consultation and information sharing. Union leaders testified to a participating administrative system, which allowed its members to positively contribute to the running of the University by consultation.

Ojo and Abolade (2014) carried out a study to investigate the impact of conflict management on employees' performance in a Public Sector Organisation (PSO) using the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) as a case study. The study adopted the survey research design. A questionnaire was deployed to collect primary data from 100 respondents using a stratified sampling technique. Findings showed that a conflict management scheme is a rewarding venture for organizations to guarantee employees' optimal performance. Where there is industrial harmony maximum output is almost certain. The researchers consequently recommended that the management of organizations should initiate a process of consultation through active and effective communication among the categories of employees in the organization.

Muigua, (2024) conducted a study to examine the relevance of the consultation approach in conflict management. The study essentially examines collaborative approaches towards conflict management and highlights collaboration, compromise, competition, accommodating, and avoidance as some methods of conflict management and acknowledges that the consequences of undeterred conflicts in any given organization are often undesirable as they can truncate peace, sustainability, and development of such an organization. A descriptive method was adopted in the study. The study inferred that a collaborative and consultative approach to managing conflict had been adjudged to be the best since it can produce acceptable and enduring outcomes when conflict is resolved. The study also ascribed that consultative techniques are a dominant style for organizational conflict management as they hinge on mutuality, open communication, and win-win orientation.

Guo, et al (2023), conducted a study to determine the relevance of the exchange of information and consultation in organizational conflict management. The objective is to determine the interconnectivity of information exchange during consultation in the process of conflict management. Survey data was deployed among construction workers. The study exposes a mechanism that illustrates the discrete and combined influences of different proportions of trust and interrelationship of information exchange in the process of conflict resolution and further confirms that it is difficult to avoid conflict in inter-organizational relationships, and consultation and information exchange are critical in conflict management. The study recognized that consultation, exchange of information, trust, and interdependence aid experts in addressing conflict. Regardless of the conflict management approach deployed, consultation and information sharing are most critical.

Methodology

Research Design and sampling

This study deployed quantitative techniques through a self-designed structured questionnaire administered to 200 respondents from Southwest Nigeria involving Executives, Management staff, and other Employees of various organizations in the region through Google form. Samples were randomly taken from Banking and Fintech, Manufacturing, Telecom, Oil and Gas, Educational sectors, Professional Institutes and MDAs sectors. Out of the population, 177 responded. The sample selected was based on respondents' status and years of experience in their respective organizations. The method was premised on the fact that respondents find it easier and more convenient to respond to e-mails, SMS, chats, and online forms than hard copy forms. Besides, to avoid an unmanageable number of respondents especially those not within the scope of the study, stratified sampling was deployed to ensure representation from various organizations targeted for the study.

Descriptive statistical methods i.e., percentages, tabulations, charts, and PPMC were used to analyse the data. The questionnaire was submitted to some Industrial and Labour Relations experts for review and validation. An experiential survey was carried out on samples of respondents in each category to measure the respondents' degree of understanding of the questionnaire.

Table 1: Gender and status distributions of the respondents

Gender		Status			
Male	Female	Executives	Mgt staff	Senior staff	Junior staff
95 (53.7%)	82 (46.3%)	49 (27.7%)	59 (33.3%)	38 (21.5%)	31 (17.5%)

This table depicts the number of respondents in terms of gender and status in number and percentages. The table above shows that more males responded to the questionnaire than females. Also, the Executives and Management categories accounted for 61% of the respondents which confirmed the credibility of the data obtained while Senior and junior staff accounted for 39%.

Table 2: Age in years and length of service distribution

Age in years				Length of service			
18-25yrs	26-35yrs	35-50yrs	50yrs +	0-5yrs	6-10yrs	11-20yrs	21-35yrs
23 (13%)	34 (19.2%)	63 (35.6%)	58 (32.8%)	31 (17.5%)	35 (19.8%)	62 (35%)	49 (27.7%)

This table depicts the ages of respondents in years and the length of years in service in numbers and percentages.

The above table showed that the respondents in the age range of 35 years and above accounted for 68.4%, which implies that they are old enough to be knowledgeable in conflict and attendance issues in their respective organizations. Also, the respondents that have spent above 11 years in their respective organizations summed up to 62.7% which indicated that they have spent an appreciable long time to enable them to express their candid opinions on the questionnaire.

Table 3: Sectors' distributions of the respondents

Banking and Fintech	Manufacturing	Professional Institutes	MDAs	Telcom	Oil and Gas	Others
31 (17.5%)	24 (13.6%)	63 (35.6%)	14 (7.9%)	15 (8.5%)	15 (8.5%)	25 (14.1%)

This table shows the respondents from each sector in number and percentages.

Ethical considerations

Consent of the respondents was obtained before administering the questionnaire. The privacy and confidentiality of respondents’ views were safeguarded.

Method of Data Analysis

Data were analysed using descriptive statistical methods. A descriptive analysis i.e., charts, tabulations, percentages, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient (PPMC) was adopted to check the relationship between consultation and conflict management. The option of the PPMC analysis method was borne out of its suitability to analyze relationships between two variables. As a predictive analysis method, PPMC described data and explained the relationship between the variables. The model adopted for the study was dependent on the formulated hypotheses which examined the relationship between consultation and conflict management i.e., $CM = f(C)$.

Data Analysis, Presentation, and Interpretation

Table 4: Data Analysis, Presentation, and Interpretation

Elements	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Strongly Disagreed	Disagreed	Total
Consultation supports in managing conflict in an organisation	78 (44.07%)	88 (49.72%)	06 (3.39%)	05 (2.83) %	177

Source: Google survey form 2024

Data presented in the table above shows how consultation interacts with conflict management in an organization.

Hypotheses

H0: No significant relationship between consultation and conflict management.

Table 5: Consultation and Conflict Management

Variables	Mean	SD	N	r	P	Remark	Decision
Consultation	3.16	0.966	177	0.533	0.001	Sig.	Ho ₁ rejected
Conflict Management	16.14	2.630					

$p < 0.05$

The table above presents the test of the relationship between consultation and conflict management in an organisation. It shows a moderate positive relationship between consultation and conflict management in the workplace, which is significant at 0.05 level of significance ($r(177) = 0.533; p = 0.001$). The **H0** hypothesis which says ‘No significant relationship between consultation and conflict management’ was rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between consultation and conflict management in the workplace.

Discussion of Findings

The objective of this study was to appreciate the importance of the roles of consultation in organisational conflict management. Findings showed that consultation: promotes organizational harmony, co-existence collaboration and fosters interaction among social groups; has a significant relationship with conflict management and plays roles different from collective bargaining in conflict management processes; deploying consultation strategies in managing conflict is beneficial to organizations as it trims down conflict and create room for a joint determination of conflict in the organization, facilitating partnership and collaborative problem-solving and decision-making attitude, replacing adversarial relationships with collaborative partnership, thereby leading to harmonious co-existence among social partners in the organization; and an effective strategy that provides supports for conflict management in workplace.

The foregoing is corroborated by Okuthe (2022) who stressed that consultation and exchange of information are sine qua non in conflict resolution. The literature reviewed also revealed the strength of consultation in facilitating mutuality of respect amongst parties involved in the conflict; fostering amiable resolution of imminent conflicts; guaranteeing employees loyalty, collaboration, and organizational efficiency; steering employees to advance the enhancement of terms and conditions of employment; promoting job satisfaction, motivation, and self-accomplishment; guaranteeing more job and pay security; and actuating respect for the capacities of employees as would be recognized by the management.

The analysis of the respondents showed that those in categories of Executives and Management accounted for 61% of the respondents which confirmed the credibility of the data obtained. Also, those who are in the age range of 35 years and above accounted for 68.4%, and those who have spent 11 years and above in their respective organizations constituted 62.7% of the respondents. These laid credence to the responses received because those in the two categories are old enough in both age and number of years spent in the organization making them knowledgeable enough to express a candid opinion about issues related to conflicts. Also gratifying to mention is the substantial number of female respondents which accounted for 46.3%. A substantial number of the respondents i.e., (166) representing (93.79%) of respondents agreed in both strong and mild terms that consultation supports organizational conflict management processes while only (11) representing (6.21%) of the respondents disagreed with strong and mild terms that consultation supports conflict management in an organization.

Conclusions

The study established that conflict in an organization is an inherent feature of social partners' relations. Sustaining harmonious relationships in an organization requires an intentional commitment to conflict management procedures and strategies. The essential purpose of conflict management in an organization is to enhance collaboration, and consensus building, promote inclusiveness of all social partners, and intervene in matters that could escalate conflict, consequently social dialogue in which consultation is a form proved to be a veritable instrument for promoting effective conflict management in organization according to findings.

The study's conclusions highlight how crucial consultation is as a conflict resolution tactic in corporate environments. The study has important ramifications for both the theoretical and practical realms:

Consultation-based conflict management techniques can be included in the organizational policies of businesses in a variety of industries, including banking, fintech, manufacturing, government agencies, telecommunications, and oil and gas. Organizations can reduce the chances of increased conflicts and promote a peaceful work environment by formally implementing consultative procedures.

According to the study, consultation promotes teamwork and takes the role of antagonistic interactions, both of which are necessary to preserve good employee relations. This suggests that to resolve complaints and improve employee happiness and trust, human resource managers should prioritize consultative discussion.

By encouraging social discourse and consensus-building, the results demonstrate that consultation creates a harmonious industrial environment. This has ramifications for labour relations procedures, indicating that to decrease strikes and industrial conflicts, organizations and unions should give consultation methods top priority.

According to the study, there is a need for courses that emphasize consultative dispute resolution methods. To proactively resolve disputes, ease stress in the workplace, and boost output, managers and team leaders should get training on adopting and putting consultative tactics into practice.

Considering the wide range of sectors that were covered by the study, the results show that consultation is a conflict resolution technique that can be used anywhere. This implies that it is applicable in a variety of organizational settings, giving it a flexible strategy for handling conflict in different operational settings.

The study advances our understanding of industrial and labour relations by clearly defining the connection between consultation and dispute resolution. It offers factual proof of how social discourse lowers conflict at work, which can guide future scholarly investigations and the creation of conflict resolution frameworks.

The study emphasizes how important it is for organizations to consciously and consistently commit to using consultation as a dispute resolution technique. Decision-makers and leaders need to understand that consultation is a proactive tactic that supports long-term growth and organizational stability rather than just a reactive one.

The study concludes by highlighting the effectiveness and versatility of consultation as a conflict management technique in the workplace. In order to create more robust, cooperative, and peaceful workplaces, organizations are urged to incorporate consultative methods into their conflict management frameworks.

Further studies can be carried out on conflict management as a contributor to fostering organizational performance, growth, and development.

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