MANAGING CONFLICTS IN ORGANISATIONS: A SOCIOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

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ABSTRACT
Conflict is an inevitable part of every developing organization. In fact, it is an inevitable part for a dynamic growth of every organization. The paper looks at conflicts both within and outside the organization. The paper believed conflict in organization is inevitable and suggested that where it occurs it must be handled and resolved amicably in order to achieve organizational success. The paper maintained that in a situation where organization fails to handle and resolved conflict it leads to organizational disharmony/conflict. The paper maintained that Trade Unions and managers are the trustees responsible for handling and minimizing conflict in most organizations. Views of the founding fathers of sociology on how to handle conflicts are discussed. And recommendations were made.
Key word: Management, Conflicts and Organisations.

INTRODUCTION
Background to the Study
For every developing organization there must be a range of conflicts at every level. Conflict is an inevitable part of dynamic growth of every organization. Organizations experienced conflicts whether in making resources, choices, or in balancing the interests of different groups. Every individual recognized the fact that everyday management involves dealing with everyday conflict.

Occasionally, individual got caught up in a seemingly intractable "Conflict Situation" where healthy tension and strong debate has given way to vices like irrational behaviour, mixed motives unreasonable pressure and misplaced emotions. These situations most often escalate out of all proportion and institution making productive work between individuals or departments in organizations less and less effective.

Ogunbameru (2004) sees conflict in organizations as inevitable. He maintain that, it is only when there is conflict or disharmony in organizations, members gets to understand their differences and make necessary amendments and adjustments.

A sociological thought to conflict believes that effective management ought to create a healthy environment that conflicts do not arise. Another school of thought believes that conflict must be reluctantly accepted as a factor of life, but must be minimized and endured rather than understood and cured. Whatever, position a conflict takes, neither of these thought is much help to the person responsible for managing the situation, this is because it will not lead through to a successful conclusion.

Scholars believed that not all individual conflict is bad, because different views, ideas, analysis and priorities usually led to better understanding; more comprehensive choice and well- developed contingency planning. It is however, often said that "a healthy conflict is a part of everyday life" failure to manage conflict in organizations breeds unhealthy conflicts which will leads to issues being disregarded and unresolved, by and large making the conflict taking a life of its own.

When these happens in organizations, organizations become the centre of all thoughts and actions which is not healthy to the development of the organization, because, it can lead to vices like damaging peoples perception on the organization, destroy the reputation of the organization, limit relationships amongst members of the organizations and fragment the organization.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework
The domain of work and organization involves an arena whereby divergent aims and interests provide an inexhaustible source of conflict at all levels.

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Managing Conflicts in Organisations: A Sociological Appraisal

Conflict in organizations emerged within and without the organizations it could be both internal and external. Conflicts in organizations can occur as a result of some reasons like, failure on the part of the management, aggressive market strategies, workers exploitation by the organization and discrimination. It could also be on other aspects like gender, age, ethnic affiliation and physical disability. Accidents and disasters could also create conflict in organizations.

Having understood the causes of conflict in organizations, management of such conflicts becomes imperative as this is the only way to ensure the success of the organization towards achieving organizational goals. Otite and Ogunowo (1980) see organizational management as the yardstick to every success in organization. In other words, they maintain that if organizations are able to content with conflict within and outside it, such organization can be able to stand the tests of time.

 However, in order to understand current patterns of organizational conflict, the paper analysed an interdisciplinary theoretical approach to conflict management so as to make comparison in time and space, as well as between different actors at different levels.

Theorists in disciplines relevant to the understanding of organizational conflict have paid less attention to the role of organizations in managing conflicts in a dynamic and increasingly complex environment. For example, economic theorists analysed conflicts arising from opposing interests particularly between principals and agents.

Principal- agent and contract theory provide an insight into how contracts should be written in such a way that the most efficient outcomes are generated in a world of incomplete enforcement and monitoring. It is a well known fact that for any organization to be effective and efficient in achieving its goals, the people in the organization (principal and agents) need to have a shared vision of what they are striving to achieve, as well as having a clear objectives for each team/departments and individuals. Principal and agents should also have ways of recognizing and resolving conflict amongst people, so that the conflict does not become so serious that co-operation become impossible.

However, some organizations have a hierarchical relationship with one another which to a large extent might extent from principal – agent theory to individuals in organizations. Other organizations sees themselves as equal players as partners in progress and this should be analysed using non-cooperative and co-operative game theory. This analysis will reduce the synthesis of inter and intra organizational conflict because every member of the organization is a partner towards the success of the organization and should contribute to the attainment of the goals of the organization.

However, a sociological theory to organization paid less attention to organizations that cause or face disorder and delay, but rather places much emphasis on the various conflicting parts in the organization. The theory believed that if only organizations exhibits justice on the part of conflicting interests of the organization, success in the organization can be possible. To sociologists, conflicts in organizations be it inter or intra can be resolve when there is equal treatment on both parties. It therefore mean that, sociological analysis of the organization is that organizations are made up of parts that are inter connected and interrelated which must have to work together to achieve organizational success.

Conflict in organizations though inevitable must not be left prolong as it will

Affect the overall performance of the organization.Korhauser,Dubin and Rose (1954,13) in Otobo (1997) define conflict in organization "As a total range of behaviour and attitudes that express opposition and divergent orientations between industrial owners and managers on the one hand, and working people and their organizations on the other".

Since conflict occurs between groups at the collective level, personality and other structural variables coming into play. Such variables may be anything the worker come in contact with, can be handled and managed amicably so as to avoid conflict. On the other hand, conflict between groups at the collective level can as well be manage through the intervention of a third party at the study of the level of grievances between the parties involved.

However, for effective management of conflict in organizations, factors such as leadership style, level of workers consciousness, other intervening variables in the area of collective bargaining, working condition of the environment and cumbersome delay in promotions have to be put into consideration. Considering all these factors and making sure that it is properly addressed will help in managing and averting conflict in organizations.

Theoretical Framework

Functionalist scholars of sociology like Parson (1974) Comte (1884), Weber (1920) and Durkheim (1940) all believed and maintained that in every human relation there exists some part or units within organizations called partners. These parts, units and partners must relate to each other in a manner of mutual respect and understanding. Parson for example, emphasized on the relationship of the parts independently and inter dependently for the survival and sustenance of the whole (organization). Merton's (1976) analysis of the organization is like a social action where every part (s) (member) of the organization must perform and exhibit. The social actions serve as the latent (intended) and manifest (unintended) consequences. This also gives a meaning to the organization because it helps to the growth and development of the organization. Durkheim (1940) believed in the sustainance of the whole (organization) through a unified force called religion. To him, religion serves as the unifying factor that brings all different parts together in the whole, without which the sustainance and continuity of the whole is impossible. Comte (1884) sees social action in both its dynamic and static nature which also contributes to the development of the whole (organization).

Sociological appraisal of conflict in organization believes that conflict is inevitable in the organizations because of the existence of divergent units, therefore managing such conflict should be the paramount function of the management of the organization so as to create a conducive environment for organizational success. Failure to address conflict in organizations will deteriorate morality, disintegrate unity and quality and inevitably standard will suffer frustration leading to other vices like irritability, anger, withdrawal from work and stress related illness. And in a situation whereby conflict in organizations becomes public fund raising in the organization can be impeded and organizations public image damaged. In this situation, the beneficiaries whom the organization exists for, suffer deterioration in service delivery.

Management in organizations develops people's confidence and improves their ability to manage and sorts out differences and strengthens relationship. The open discussion in managing conflict can uncover hidden problems that need to be addressed and when that is done, challenges can be accepted, restructured leading to production success in the organization.

TRUSTEES RESPONSIBLE FOR MANAGING CONFLICT IN ORGANISATION AND THE WAY FORWARD

Most conflicts in organizations are managed by the trustees more especially in the area of grievances and discipline. Managers of the organization should be responsible for dealing with conflict in accordance with the laid down procedure. But it is more important for managers and trustees of the organization to think of how to handle conflict before it happens by developing some guidelines for dealing with conflict in organizations.

However, sorting out conflict within the organization is the best option if the organizations want to succeed and achieve its objectives. Sometimes it is necessary for the organization to invite external helpers like trade unions and facilitators to assist in reaching consensus in the organization.

Trade Unions played a very important and crucial role in managing conflicts in organization. Trade unions are organizations run by and for the workers who have banded together to achieve a common goal. Their main areas of intervention on behalf of the workers are in the areas of wages, working hours and condition of service. Trade unions through its leadership, bargains with the employer on behalf of union members, negotiate labour contracts in terms of wages, work rules, complaint procedures rules governing hiring, firing and promotion of workers, they also intervene in terms of workers benefits, workers safety and policies. It is worthy to note that the agreements negotiated by the union leaders are binding on the rank and file members and their employers and in some cases on other non-member workers. In doing so, union leaders are able to manage and control any dispute or disharmony that might arise in the organization.

It is generally believed that differences in beliefs and behaviours in organizations can easily create disharmony and it is a profound reality that any organization is bound to face. Bernard (1980) sees differences in organization as the engine room to organizational success. To him, organization composed of diverse entities and diverse individuals' ideas, and views are easily spread and shared and these bring development and effective performance of the organization.

The multi-faceted increase in diversity in organization underlines the importance of a sound scientific understanding of how to decrease the risk of conflict in organizations. This is due to the fact that every individual actor in the organization is tied by informal agreement which to a much lesser extent in most cases rely solely on a common understanding of "correct" and "good" behaviour. Therefore, the success of the organization is

determined by its ability to sustained itself and create positive changes in the organization through a reciprocal behaviour.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Managing conflict in organization with heterogeneous actors can lead to a good policy and easily dealing with challenges faced by the organization. Studies by Barendrecht (2008) reveals that conflict can, under certain specific circumstances, increase productivity, creativity and innovation. Hence, to some extent where such conflicts are not properly managed, it tends the individual's worker to be dissatisfied, leading to high absenteeism in the organization. Therefore, this will create a challenge for the organizations, and specifically the executives, managers and employees who will try to attempt a balance between increased diversity and competition within the organization.

Conclusively, it is generally agreeable that managing conflict in organization or workplace can only be possible when there is an agreed mechanism between the groups (management and workers) to collectively resolve issues. The process of agreed mechanism is called "collective bargaining". In this situation the two representatives must come together with a mandate to work out a solution collectively.. Evidence and experience have shown that collective bargaining is far better than avoidance or withdrawal. It is also proven that putting democratic processes through integrative problem solving is feasible in resolving conflict in organization.

Integration problem solving mechanism is a situation where people or groups find ways of co-operating in the same organization, this is possible when members come to term and agreed with their own rules and procedures.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the lingering crises engulfing most organizations and working places today the paper recommends the followings:

Members of the organization should see themselves as partners in progress rather than individuals sentiments persuing only their selfish interest.

The organization should find a way of resolving conflicts as soon as possible before it escalate.

Management of the organizations should see every member of the organization as important partner in the management of the organization.

There must be collective participation and representation of each unit in the organization in-terms of decision making and collective bargaining.

Management should ensure that it provide a conducive working environment to their workers so as to achieve organizational goals and success.

Where conflict is inevitable or arise, management should ensure that the process of negotiation, mediation and arbitration are implored so as to bring peace to the organization.

Management should recognized trade unions role in the organization as important partners to the success of the organization.

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