

IMPACT OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ON NON-ACADEMIC STAFF PERFORMANCE: A CASE STUDY OF AIR FORCE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, KADUNA, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of conflict management practices on the performance of non-academic staff of the Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna State, Nigeria. Survey research design was adopted for the study, with three research questions answered, and three null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study's population was 1,129 non-academic employees of the Air Force Institute of Technology Kaduna. The sample size was 295 using the Taro Yamane formula to derive it. Structured questionnaires, titled 'Conflict Management Practices and Employees' Performance Scale (CMPEPS)' was used to collect needed data, after three research experts from the Education Measurement and Evaluation of the Kaduna State University had validated it. The test-retest method was employed in ascertaining 0.89 as the reliability coefficient. Mean, standard deviation and z-test were used for the data analysis. The study found that collective bargaining, communication, and mediation had a significant impact on the performance of non-academic staff of the Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna. The study concluded that an increase in non-academic performance is dependent on the effectiveness of collective bargaining, communication, and mediation. Therefore, the variables should be considered very important when considering conflict-related issues for employee performance at Air Force Institute of Technology Kaduna, Nigeria.

Keywords: Impact, Conflict Management Practices, Employees Performance.

Introduction

All across the world, conflicts arise in organizations. Regardless of the magnitude of the conflicts, prevention is nearly impossible. Although conflict is difficult to avoid, it can be managed because there are telltale indicators. Internal workplace upheavals may gradually become the organization's identity if relevant businesses' management does not act swiftly enough to address them. Unknowingly fostering conflict is possible in any organization that permits discontent to develop, especially among its members. According to Putnam and Krone (2017), employee conflict is not only unavoidable in complex companies but also an important factor that should not be overlooked. The reason behind this is that, when handled appropriately, it can enhance worker satisfaction and output (Dana, 2020).

Some recent research has reported that management executives are now spending twice as much time as they did a decade ago resolving employee conflicts (Accountemps, 2019; Alain, 2018). The organization can improve its performance in terms of using limited resources and attaining the organizational goals if disputes are adequately managed by employing the appropriate course of action (Awan & Anjum, 2017). Conversely, unmanaged conflict negatively impacts both employee satisfaction and performance. Effective conflict resolution has the power to raise worker satisfaction and work output.

Conflict management involves acquiring skills related to conflict resolution, establishing structures of conflict models, and putting strategic measures as well as approaches in place (Petkovic, 2018). The models of conflict management are instruments or practices used to assess the appropriate action required in a conflict situation. Approaches to conflict management, focus on the principle that conflicts cannot necessarily be resolved but can be managed using appropriate actions such as accommodating, avoiding, collaborating, compromising, and confrontation (Brigs, 2018). Strategies for conflict management are a futuristic detailed approach that looks into achieving long-term wins for the parties involved in conflict. Strategies include negotiation, collective bargaining, mediation, third-party intervention, brainstorming, and communication (Petkovic, 2018). The current study concentrated on collective bargaining, communication, and mediation because they are considered more influential in staff-related performance. In the bid to manage potential conflicts, the management should always bear in mind that conflict is inevitable.

No matter what mechanism is put in place, conflicts are pervasive and permeate all aspects of the organization as they arise among members of an organization and between employees. Conflicts occur in both profit and non-profit making organizations. For this reason and more, managers strive to reconcile divergent opinions as an absence of conflict is a good indication of enhanced performance. Conflicts in the organization are the most critical to contend with because they are usually unpredictable and uncertain. These conflicts are derived from disparities in beliefs, values, and cultures. This makes them distinct from each other. Conflicts are understood to lead to various industrial actions which could cause a setback to the organization, including the Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna. In light of this backdrop, this study investigates the impact of conflict management practices on the performance of non-academic staff of the Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Conflicts are unavoidable in all human endeavors, associations, or organizations. Organizations over the years have faced one form of unrest or the other. These unrests are often caused by divergent interests of the management and workers. Conflicts in organizations occur because as individuals work to accomplish the organization's goals and objectives, they also seek to satisfy their own needs. Although managers have made significant efforts to manage conflict within their firms, they have not been successful because conflict reports continue to be published. In recent years, there has been an increase in interest in conflict management. Numerous studies have sparked interest in conflict resolution techniques that, in the past, could have required courtroom litigation. The

workplace is becoming more and more legal, especially when it comes to harassment, discrimination, and occupational health and safety. Another area that has received more attention is the requirement that businesses switch to high-performance work systems.

It appears that the hierarchical structures, strict labor divisions, specialized job descriptions, intricate regulations, low employee involvement, and managerial decision-making, authority, and control over the workplace are all signs of outdated workplace practices and systems that encourage conflict. Performance in the majority of firms has declined dramatically as a result of ongoing organizational conflict. Worker agitation for better working conditions and other causes has become more prevalent, which has taken a toll on productivity inside firms. Ineffective dispute resolution has resulted in a decline in important metrics like profit margins and sales return on investment.

Thus, this scenario inspired the researchers to look into the reasons behind the need for conflict management techniques to improve employee performance, with a focus on the non-academic staff of the Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to examine the impact of conflict management on non-academic employees' performance at the Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to examine the effect of:

1. collective bargaining on non-academic employees' work morale at the Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna.
2. communication on non-academic employees' performance at the Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna.
3. mediation on non-academic employees' work performance at the Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna.

Research Questions

The following questions were drafted to guide the study:

1. To what extent does collective bargaining affect non-academic employees' performance at the Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna?
2. To what extent does communication affect non-academic employees' performance at the Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna?
3. To what extent does mediation affect non-academic employees' performance at the Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 alpha level:

1. Collective bargaining has no significant effect on non-academic employees' work morale at the Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna based on gender.
2. Communication has no significant effect on non-academic employee performance at the Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna based on gender.
3. Mediation has no significant impact on non-academic employee performance at Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna based on gender.

Methodology

The research design adopted in this study was the survey research design. The study's population was 1,129 non-academic employees of the Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna. The sample size was 295 using the Taro Yamane formula to derive it. Structured questionnaires, titled 'Conflict Management Practices and Employees' Performance Scale (CMPEPS)' were used to collect needed data, after three research experts from the Education Measurement and Evaluation of the Kaduna State University had validated it. The test-retest method was employed in ascertaining 0.89 as the reliability coefficient. Mean, standard deviation and z-test were used for the data analysis

Presentation and Interpretation of Results

Research Question 1: To what extent does collective bargaining affect non-academic employees' performance at the Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna?

Table 1: Mean rating and standard deviation of non-academic staff on the extent collective bargaining affects non-academic employees' performance.

Collective bargaining as a conflict management practice affects job performance because:		Mean	SD	Remark
1.	It ensures a greater voice of workers on matters that affect their job	2.76	1.094	High extent
2.	It produces better work-related policies with fairer working conditions	2.74	1.169	High extent
3.	It improves workplace harmony and teamwork	2.76	1.109	High extent
4.	It triggers quicker responses from the authorities concerned	2.79	1.205	High extent
5.	It can improve the overall performance of staff	2.70	0.999	High extent
Cluster Mean		2.75	1.145	High extent

Table 1 above revealed that the cluster mean of responses on collective bargaining is 2.75 and the standard deviation is 1.145. This suggests that every item in the collective bargaining instrument has a significant influence on the productivity of AFIT's non-academic staff.

Research Question 2: To what extent does communication affect non-academic employees' performance at the Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna?

Table 2: Mean rating and standard deviation of non-academic staff on the extent communication affects employees' performance.

Communication as a conflict management practice affects job performance because:		Mean	SD	Remark
1.	It reduces anxiety and suspicion at conflicting times at work	2.81	1.295	High extent
2.	It deepens relationships at work	2.72	1.284	High extent
3.	It creates an avenue through which conflicting parties are heard and yearning properly understood	2.87	1.207	High extent
4.	It prevents any form of resentment and feeling of not being considered important	2.79	1.274	High extent
5.	It improves a healthy work environment	2.82	1.278	High extent
Cluster Mean		2.80	1.267	High extent

From Table 2, it is understood that the cluster mean on communication is 2.80 while the standard deviation is 1.267. In essence, each of the items of the questionnaire that is related to communication has an impact on the non-academic performance of employees at AFIT.

Research Question 3: To what extent does mediation affect non-academic employees' performance at the Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna?

Table 3: Mean rating and standard deviation of non-academic staff on the extent mediation affects non-academic employees' performance.

Mediation as a conflict management practice affects job performance because:		Mean	SD	Remark
1.	It is informal, making more flexible for working conditions to be fairly adjusted	2.72	1.034	High extent
2.	It guarantees confidentiality in the process of managing workplace conflict	2.80	1.304	High extent
3.	It aids in resolving conflicts quicker	2.70	1.290	High extent
4.	It is a less expensive and easily affordable practice for managing conflict at work	2.65	1.195	High extent
5.	It ensures greater control and moderation of conflicting issues between parties involved	2.69	1.345	High extent
Cluster Mean		2.71	1.204	High extent

In Table 3, it is found that the cluster mean of responses on mediation is 2.71 with the standard deviation being 1.204. This indicates that the individual items of the instrument related to mediation are considered to have an impact on the performance of employees at Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna.

Test of the Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Collective bargaining has no significant effect on non-academic employees' work morale at the Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna based on gender.

Table 4: *Z-test for male and female responses on the extent collective bargaining affects non-academic employees' performance.*

Variables	N	X	SD	DF	p-value	Alpha level	Remark
Male	100	2.73	0.72	293	0.000	0.05	rejected
Female	195	2.72	0.70				

An examination of Table 4 shows that the p-value is 0.000, and the alpha level is 0.05. This indicates that the p-value is less than the alpha level, meaning that the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that based on gender, collective bargaining has a significant effect on non-academic employees' work morale at the Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna.

Hypothesis 2: Communication has no significant effect on non-academic employees' work morale at the Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna based on gender.

Table 5: *Z-test for male and female responses on the extent communication affects non-academic employees' performance.*

Variables	N	X	SD	DF	p-value	Alpha level	Remark
Male	100	2.81	0.73	293	0.000	0.05	rejected
Female	195	2.79	0.71				

Table 5 revealed that the p-value is 0.000, and the alpha level is 0.05, which entails that the p-value is less than the alpha level. This means that the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that communication has a significant effect on non-academic employees' work morale at the Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna based on gender.

Hypothesis 3: Mediation has no significant effect on non-academic employees' work morale at the Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna based on gender.

Table 6: *Z-test for male and female responses on the extent mediation affects non-academic employees' performance.*

Variables	N	X	SD	DF	p-value	Alpha level	Remark
Male	100	2.72	0.69	293	0.000	0.05	rejected
Female	195	2.70	0.70				

From Table 6, it was found that the p-value is 0.000, and the alpha level is 0.05. This interprets that the p-value is less than the alpha level. This implies that the null hypothesis was rejected, hence mediation has a significant effect on non-academic employees' work morale at Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna, based on gender.

Discussion of Findings

The study's report findings demonstrated that each independent variable (collective bargaining, communication, and mediation) had a mean rating that was higher than the benchmark of 2.5. This indicates that the performance of non-academic employees at the Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna, has been significantly impacted by the individual questionnaire items. The study also found that non-academic employee performance at the Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna, is significantly impacted by collective bargaining, communication, and mediation. The finding that collective bargaining has an impact on the non-academic employees' performance of AFIT, Kaduna State, Nigeria is in line with the study of Mangkunegara and Octorend (2015); Kajonga (2013); and Stephen (2012), who earlier reported that collective bargaining influences staff performance.

The discovery that collective bargaining affects the employee performance of AFIT staff members in Kaduna State, Nigeria, is consistent with the findings of past studies by Mangkunegara and Octorend (2015), Kajonga (2013), and Stephen (2012). The study by Barraies, Chaher, and Yahia (2014); Latifi and Shooshtaria (2014); and Oktug (2012), whose similar studies found that effective communication as a conflict management practice helps in resolving employees' unrest, and consequently their commitment and performance for the organizations they work for, is consistent with the report of the study that communication has a significant impact on the performance of the non-academic staff of AFIT, Kaduna State. Additionally, the study revealed that AFIT's non-academic workforce is significantly impacted by mediation. In a similar vein, Ali (2016), Khuog and Quoc (2016), and Allameh and Rostami (2014) stated from their numerous studies that the implementation of an efficient mediation approach is necessary for conflict resolution in any firm to increase staff performance.

Conclusion

The study's conclusions demonstrated that employee performance at the Air Force Institute of Technology was significantly impacted by conflict management procedures. The non-academic staff performance at the Air Force Institute of Technology in Kaduna State has been positively and considerably impacted by collective bargaining, communication, and mediation, to put it simply. As a result, the success of collective bargaining, communication, and mediation all depend on how well employees perform. When taking conflict-related factors into account for non-academic success at the institute, these variables should be given a lot of weight.

Recommendations

The following suggestions were given in light of the conclusions revealed by the findings:

1. In light of the study's conclusions, AFIT's management in Kaduna State, Nigeria, ought to give collective bargaining more thought and work to identify new, creative methods to use to maximize worker performance.
2. AFIT should improve communication with employees by being information-sensitive and using plain language that avoids ambiguity. There would be clarity in comprehending the duties to be completed if communication with the staff was kind, straightforward, and direct.
3. Whenever the necessity for mediation arises, AFIT should continue to promote favorable channels for mediation. By providing opportunities for mediation, miscommunications might be quickly resolved, saving the institute time and other resources that would otherwise be wasted if a conversation space wasn't made available.

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