Research Article

Strategies Applied in Resolving Organizational Conflict in the Academe: An Experienced-based Approach

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ABSTRACT

There is no organization with no conflict situations (Kharadze & Gulua (2023), thus, this research identified and analysed organizational conflict in the subject institution. It further investigated the effectiveness of conflict resolution as practiced by the select organization. The study is qualitative in nature and utilized twelve (12) key informants selected by way of purposive sampling. Results revealed common organizational conflicts, strategies and suggestions based on the experience of the select key informants. The following organizational conflicts were culled out: Misinterpretation/Misunderstanding, Failure to Comply, Leadership Conflict, Professional Rivalry, Work Load Distribution and Undesirable Decision-making. On the other hand, the following are the common strategies applied to solve organizational conflict: Teambuilding, One-on-One Interaction, Portraying Positive Disposition, Identifying and Eradicating Root Causes and Policy Re-orientation. Lastly, the following are suggested by the key informants to lessen if not to solve organizational conflict: Socialization Activities, Collaborative Activities, Expert Advice, Helpful Attitude and Openness and Honesty.

***Keywords**: Conflict management, Conflict strategies, Organizational conflict*

Introduction

Organization is composed of people who are working together, communicating and interacting with one another. This interaction is known as interpersonal relationship which must be productive, cooperative and satisfying. However, almost every relationship will produce some degree of conflict across time which may bring about adverse effects to the organization and to its members as well. Whether the organizational conflict will be destructive or constructive depends on the attitudes and skills of the participants. That is why there is a need for some approaches to conflict resolution and to study the possible outcomes. Employees need to develop their assertiveness in order to be heard and respected by their peers. There must be guidelines for

understanding oneself and for communicating more effectively.

However, in spite of the best efforts at prevention, conflict does arise. The secret is to learn to cope positively with conflict, and not to see it as an enemy to peace, but an opportunity for growth in relationship. Jesus gave an example of how to manage conflict. In John 2:13-17, he drove the moneychangers doing business out of the Temple. The point here is not that leaders should take a whip to people they have conflict with, but that there are a number of ways in which leaders or managers could deal with conflict and one that they should follow as they handle problem situations. In talking to his disciples, Jesus outlined a process for restoring relationships between Christians who are odds with each other stating that, "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother." (Matthew 18:15-20)

Sometimes sources of conflict and the strategies in resolving conflicts depend on communication with an organization. Communication is the primary area of focus for outstanding human interactions and learning methods of changing one's behavior and influencing that of others. This is an area in which individuals can make great strides in improving their own effectiveness. It is also the point of major conflicts and misunderstandings between two people, between members of a team, between groups, and within the total organization as a system. This is one reason communication strategies are widely applied in conflict resolution and this includes among others, communication workshops, and sensitivity training which deals with helping people communicate better.

Thus, this research is conducted to determine and analyse the organizational conflict arising in the select organization and likewise its conflict resolutions.

Methods

The study utilized qualitative design which is descriptive in nature. Qualitatively, the study determined from the key informants their experienced conflict/s as well as the solution that they have implemented.

Sample and Sampling

A total of twelve (12) key informants were utilized in the study and selected by way of purposive sampling.

Research Instrument

Guide questions focusing on the experiences of academic administrators with regards to conflict identification and management.

Result and Discussion
Themes on Conflict Management Practices
Table 1. Summary of Themes on Organizational Conflict

Themes	
1	Misinterpretation / Misunderstanding
2	Failure to Comply
3	Leadership Conflict
4	Professional Rivalry
5	Load/Work Distribution
6	Undesirable Decision-making

Results revealed at least six common organizational/institutional conflicts experienced by the academic administrators: Misinterpretation/Misunderstanding, Failure to Comply, Leadership Conflicts, Professional Rivalry, Load/Work Distribution and Undesirable Decision-making. The mentioned conflicts are common in the academe to which academic personnel might have misunderstanding and or misinterpretation on some academic requirements or policies such as prioritization in terms of faculty loading to which, in mind if not expressed in written, senior faculty members are given priority in loading while new faculty

may think that it is specialization and not seniority will be the consideration and this is true also when it comes work load distribution. As mentioned by Suleymen, A (2023), conflict refers to a situation in which persons or group disagree over means or ends and try to establish their views in preference to others. Suleymen, A (2023), also added that, conflict is perceived or experienced incompatible differences within the individual or between two or more individuals which may lead to some or other form of opposition. Similarly, the failure to comply, though, fault of the subject personnel, may give rise to organizational conflict since on the perspective of the academic heads, this is considered disobedience and penalty must be enforced and this may result to conflict between academic head and their subordinates. Likewise, leadership conflict may arise when a new academic head is appointed and insisting their own values and customs practice to which people in the said organization may not accept, thus, resistance may arise. Also, inter-conflict between leaders may affect the performance of the institution as a whole and may also effect the individual performance of faculty members. In the academe, professional rivalry exist among its members especially among new employees as well as between new employees and old employees. This is due to the individual differences in terms of beliefs, culture, values and or academic practices. Lastly, undesirable decision is also a source of conflict in the academe. Decisions that are not consulted among the members of a specific department may be viewed differently, especially when its effect is detrimental to the faculty members.

Table 2. Summary of Strategies Applied to Organizational Conflict

Themes	
1	Teambuilding
2	One-on-one interaction
3	Portraying Positive Disposition
4	Identifying and Eradicating Root Cause
5	Policy Re-orientation

Results revealed five common strategies applied by the key informants to solve organizational conflicts: Teambuilding, One-on-One Interaction, Portraying Positive Disposition, Identifying and Eradicating Root Causes and Policy Re-orientation. To minimize if not to eradicate organizational conflict, conducting teambuilding activities is a good strategy. This activity allows individual to recognize the value of a team in an organization and the effectiveness of working as a team. Another strategy is to conduct a direct interaction with people involve in the conflict. A one on one personal discussion is also a good strategy to solve an existing conflict. Indicated in the research of Kondo, H et al (2021), interaction with related parties inside and outside the organization, the project being managed, and the importance of the project have an impact on conflict handling. Similarly, portrayal of positive disposition during conflict may help parties involve and help build a good interpersonal relationship as well as creation of an open communication line between head and faculty members and among faculty members. Likewise, the identification and eradication of conflict's root causes is a must and should be given a paramount importance. Solving the root cause is the first and foremost preferred solution or strategy to be applied to any existing conflict. Lastly, since interpretation on academic policies is sometimes a source of conflict, re-orientation is a good strategy. This will help academic personnel to keep informed on the policies implemented by their respective institution.

Table 3. Summary of Suggestions to Solve Organizational Conflict

Themes	
1	Socialization
2	Collaborative Activities
3	Expert Advise
4	Helpful Attitude
5	Openness and Honesty

Aside from the current strategies applied by the key informants to address conflicts, results revealed five suggestions to solve organizational conflict such as Socialization, Collaborative Activities, Expert Advice, Helpful Attitude and Openness and Honesty. Among the suggestions, socialization comes first as this can lessen or mitigate the tension between employees of the organization. This can be done by having them join meetings and let them interact during said session. By establishing socialization, this can harmonize the relationship between heads and faculty members. Similarly, a collaborative activity can also strengthen the professional relationship in the organization. Being helpful, open and honest is something innate with the employees, thus, practicing such will improve the line of communication and eventually improving the relationship among employees.

Conclusion

Conflict arise in all organization and the academe is not an exemption. We may not be able to fully eradicate such but mitigating conflicts and lessening its effect is not impossible. Thus, the development of strategic solutions is a must to address the adverse or detrimental effect of the existing conflict not just to the employees but for the entire organization. The strategic process may help the establishment of an effective conflict management solutions and strategies and ensures a good interpersonal and professional relationship among members of the organization. Leaders and their leadership style plays a critical role in solving organizational conflicts, however, all members of the organization should cooperate and collaborate in creating effective and efficient ways of solving conflict between and among members of the organization.

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