

Conflict Management on Employee Performance in the Ministry Of Youth and Economic Empowerment: A Case Study of Shurugwi District

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Abstract: The researcher conducted a quantitative study based on questionnaire and interview guide as data collection instruments on conflict management on employee performance in the Ministry of Youth and Economic Empowerment in Shurugwi District in Zimbabwe's Midlands Province. Respondents comprised of seventy-eight (78) employees randomly selected. The study revealed that the major sources of conflict include specialisation common resources, goal differences, interdependence, authority relationships, status difference, roles and expectations, skills and abilities, personality among others. The study also revealed that the major cause of conflict was interpersonal relations between employees in the Ministry of Youth Development and Economic Empowerment should train its employees on conflict management so as to improve organisational performance. The study also recommends that the organisation engages in functional conflict which promotes the goals of the organisation as its basis to enhance maximum contribution of employees.

Keywords: Conflict, management, employee, performance, conflict resolution

INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Youth, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment (MYIEE) is a Government department whose main role and function is to develop, promote and implement policies and programmes for the empowerment of youths and indigenous citizens in order to achieve sustainable and equitable development. The ministry started in 1980 after independence as ministry of Community Development. It was concerned with the development of the community thereby establishing pre-schools, adult literacy schools, and cooperatives and monitors the village health workers. Its establishment was less than 20 employees per District.

The Ministry's roles and functions remain unchanged although the name changes several times. The Ministry was split into two Ministries in 2004 whilst it was Ministry of Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation (MYDGEC). The two Ministries are now known as Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development (MWAGCD) and Ministry of Youth Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment (MYIEE). The MYIEE is found in almost every District of Zimbabwe. The MYIEE in Shurugwi District's staff establishment is currently 130 employees.

According to Deutsch, [15], conflict inevitably means that people are working against each other in such a way that what one wants is incompatible with that which another wants. The dysfunctional view of organisational conflict is imbedded in the notion that organisations are created to achieve goals by creating structure that perfectly define job responsibilities, authorities, and other job functions. This traditional view of organisations values orderliness, stability and the repression of any conflict that occurs. The Functional view of organisational conflict sees conflict

as a productive force, one that can stimulate members of the organisational to increase their knowledge and skills and their contribution to organisational innovation and productivity. If you subscribe to a flexible vision of effective organisations, and recognise that each conflict situation provides opportunity to improve, you then shift your view of conflict. Rather than trying to eliminate conflict, or suppress its symptoms, your task becomes managing conflict so that it enhances people and organisations, rather than destroying people and organisations [4].

The MYIEE staff have a unique mentality and organisational culture. It is argued that the MYIEE non-management staff has a lack of self discipline and are not punctual or pay attention to details. There is a high degree of cooperation within non-management staff and a low level of cooperation between non-management staff and management staff. Such a uniqueness of culture represents an interesting object for studying conflict management in MYIEE Shurugwi District.

The need for an effective management to ameliorate the problems emanating from conflict and assist the organisation in their struggle for the attachment of corporate objectives cannot be over emphasised. The effective management of these conflicts will go a long way to enhance the performance of the organisation in meeting its mandate. It is in light of the above problems that the research will be conducted.

Generally, employees and management in the Ministry of Youth, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment in Shurugwi District do not seem to relate harmoniously. This results in endless conflicts among the workers as well as between the workers and management. Conflict may lead to non-productive

performance within the Ministry and thus the need to come up with suggestions to manage the conflict.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the prevalence of conflict in the Ministry of Youth, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment in Shurugwi District?
- What are the major causes of this conflict?
- To what extent is the organisation resolving the conflicts?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study stemmed from the fact that it sought to expose the major factors that lead to conflict in the Ministry of Youth, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment. A clear understanding of the causes of conflict is necessary so that remedial measures can be devised to reduce the conflicts so that workers and managers expend their energies on their core-business and not on fighting. It was also hoped that authorities in the Ministry of Youth, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment would use the findings to improve the conditions of service in the district so that conflicts are minimised.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conflicts happen each day and their successful management is a key element of organisational and managerial success. It is a fact of our lives and if we are able to understand it and its impact on work effectiveness, we can make conflict useful and use them to achieve better results. There is no universally accepted definition of conflict. Folger, Scott, Poole and Stutman [6] defined conflict as “the interaction of independent people who perceive incompatibility”. Cahn and Abigail [5] also defined conflict as a problematic situation, differing perceptions and desired outcomes, interdependence, potential which adversely affect the relationship between individuals. Conflict is a likely result of contacts within family, friends, and colleagues, as well as between managers and their subordinates [16]; thus, conflict is inevitable whenever human element is involved.

In 2005 Thomas defines a conflict as a “disagreement in opinions between people or groups, due to differences in attitudes, beliefs, values or needs. In the business world, differences in such characteristics as work experience, personality, peer group, environment and situation, all lead to differences in personal attitudes, beliefs, values or needs”. From the above definitions it is obvious that there is no just one practical definition of conflict. Each person has an individual way of thinking and behaves differently from others in similar situations. It can be concluded that conflict can affect everyone to varying extent [10].

views conflict as a process of social interaction and a social situation, where interests and activities of participants (individuals or groups) actually, or

apparently[7], confront, block and disable the realisation of one party’s objectives. In addition, conflict is a process where person A deliberately makes an effort to prevent efforts of person B with an opposing action, which will result in frustrating Person B to achieve his goals or satisfy his interests [12]. Organisational conflict occurs, as actors engage in activities that are incompatible with those of colleagues within their network, members of other organisations, or unaffiliated individuals who utilise the services or products of the organisation [13]. The same author conceptualises conflict as an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities (individual groups, organisations, etc).

A lot of people consider conflict as fighting, although it is important to realise that there are other sides of conflict. A conflict is often seen as a condition A in which people experience a clash of opposing wishes, wants or even needs [17]. Conflict consists of several components. Number one is disagreement or differences in the position of the parties participating in the conflict. For the issue to emerge, a misunderstanding or discrepancy in opinions or needs should take place. A vivid example of disagreement can be points of view on job responsibilities from employees and supervisors. Sometimes managers can ask for additional tasks to be done as a part of organisational team performance which might be considered as inappropriate or out of line [4].

For the disagreement to arise parties of the conflict should be identified. They take different sides according to their beliefs, values and needs. Parties are the second component of any conflict, be it at a workplace or in social settings. Some managers might overlook the point that some parties of the conflict might be unaware that they participate, however it is important to recognise all of the parties to successfully solve issues.

Third constituent of any conflict is needs, beliefs, interests and concerns of the parties [4]. According to Maslow’s pyramid of needs each human being possesses basic or physiology needs such as breathing, eating and sleeping, which determine his or her actions in life. The basic needs are accompanied by safety, love or belonging, esteem and self actualisation [18] which is required to be met for a human being to feel integrity and safety. There are two types of values: terminal and instrument. Terminal values are “lifelong goals and objectives that an individual seeks to achieve” [8]. They are comfortable life, a world at peace, family security, pleasure, self-respect, wisdom, social recognition and others.

Instrumental values are “a mode of conduct that an individual seeks to value” [8]. Examples of these values can be ambitions, capability, cleanliness,

forgiveness, honesty, independence and more. If parties of the conflict have opposite or different values, it will result in dissimilar sides and attitudes. "The more the employees' values are congruent with the organisational values, the more successful the individual will be and the more successful the organisation will be" [11].

Organisational citizenship behaviour can also be a reason for a conflict as an example of collapse of values and beliefs in the organisation. Although, "they are the behaviours that are not required of organisational members, but that contribute to and are necessary for organisational efficiency, effectiveness and competitive advantage" [8], most employees try to follow the unwritten rules. If a single mother is not able to work longer hours or come to work at weekends to help her co-workers, she might be perceived in an unsatisfactory way by her colleagues and cause an interpersonal conflict due to the differences between her and organisational beliefs and values.

Often employees feel underappreciated and underpaid which results in job dissatisfaction and conflict at their workplace or nationwide. When McDonalds' employees demanded 15 dollars per hour instead of 7.50 the whole US chain of the fast food restaurants faced a problem of workers and managers having a conflict. Fourth component is the perceived threat which determines people's actions and their position in the conflict. In reality, perceived threat might not be the same as the real threat they confront, thus people's behaviour could be modified inappropriately [4]. Low emotional intelligence which is "the ability to understand and manage one's own moods and emotions and the moods and emotions of other people" [8] might worsen the conflict as people could express some thoughts they never wished to be revealed or act "in a fit of temper" by, as in our example, threatening to walk away from jobs.

Orientations to Conflict: Constructive or Destructive

For many decades, managers had been taught to view conflict only as a negative force. Nowadays two different orientations to conflict have evolved: functional and dysfunctional. Functional form of conflict, or constructive conflict, supports the goals of the organisation and improves its performance. Functional conflict may actually encourage greater work effort and help task performance. One of the main benefits of constructive conflict it is that it gives its members a chance to identify the problems and see the opportunities. Also it can inspire to new ideas, learning and growth among individuals. When individuals engage in constructive conflict, they can learn more about themselves and others. In addition, it can help to improve relationships among members, because when two sides work on resolving a disagreement together, they feel that they have mutually accomplished something. Such orientation to conflict

can mostly be found in US in interpersonal communication texts [9].

In 1992 David Augsburg, an American Anabaptist author, introduced four assumptions aligning with functional orientation:

- Conflict is a normal, useful process.
- All issues are subject to change through negotiation.
- Direct confrontation and conciliation are valued.
- Conflict is a necessary renegotiation of an implied contract – a redistribution of opportunity, release of tension and renewal of relationship.

The first assumption means that although conflict is a complicated process, it can strengthen relationships. If the conflict is managed correctly, it will lead to stronger healthier and more satisfying relationship. In this case conflict also increases cohesiveness of groups. With reference to the second and third assumptions the main idea is to recognise conflict as soon as possible and work through it in a productive way [19].

Referring to dysfunctional conflict, it is believed to be destructive. Such form of conflict usually hinders organisational performance and leads to decreased productivity. This conflict orientation is characterised by competing individual interests overriding the business's overall interests. Managers withhold information from one another. Employees sabotage others' work, either intentionally or through subtle, conflict-motivated interest in teamwork [9]

The differences between these two types of conflict are not in their sources but in the manner in which each of them is expressed. In constructive conflict, each party resists attacking the other. Instead, both sides take part in thoughtful discussion. They listen to each other's point of view, and try to find mutually beneficial solutions. By contrast, in dysfunctional conflict both parties are involved in confrontation which doesn't lead to any beneficial solution [14].

METHODOLOGY

The study employed the quantitative methodology. The quantitative methodology was chosen for its ability to enable this study's findings to be generalised to other universities [1]. The quantitative methodology was also found to be useful in this study because it enabled the researcher to investigate 78 employees' perceptions on the management of conflict in the Ministry of Youth and Economic Empowerment in Shurugwi District of Zimbabwe. The study settled for the survey research design. The use of the survey design enabled the researcher to gather widespread perceptions of respondents in regard to the studies phenomenon [2]. The study used simple random sampling to select workers and managers because it permitted every employee to have an equal chance of participating in the study [3]. The researcher used the

questionnaire and interviews to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire enabled the researcher to collect predetermined respondents' opinions regarding the studied phenomenon [3]. The interviews enabled the researcher to obtain the actual feelings of the respondents regarding conflict management in the Ministry of Youth and Economic Empowerment.

Presentation of Data

The study sought to investigate the conflict management process in the Ministry of Youth and Economic Empowerment in Zimbabwe.

Table-1: Composition of respondents by gender (N=78)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	38	49
Female	40	51
Grand Total	78	100

The table above represented the gender levels, it illustrated that there was a presence of more females than males. Males represented 49% of the workforce population, while females occupied 51% of the population at MYIEE.

Table-2: Composition of respondents by age (N=78)

Age (Years)	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<20		0	0
21-30		10	13
31-40		28	36
41-50		22	28

>51	18	23
Grand Total	78	100

The table above represents the age structure of the 39 respondents at MYIEE. The age range was from 20 years old to 59 years old. More than three quarters of the employees were between 31 and 50 years. From the participants 87% were between the ages of 31 and 59 years. The remaining 13% was represented by the ages 21-30.

Table-3: Composition of respondents by academic qualifications (N= 78)

Academic Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High School	8	10
Diploma	36	46
Bachelor's Degree	24	31
Master's Degree	10	13
Doctorate	0	0
Grand Total	78	100

The table above depicts that 4(10%) of the sample have high school qualification, 18(46%) of the sample population are holders of Diplomas, 12(31%) are holders of Bachelor's degrees. An average of 5(13%) are holders of Masters Degrees. There are no holders of doctorate degrees. This indicates that three quarters of the population at least holders of certificates.

Sources of conflict

This question sought to reveal the sources of conflict:

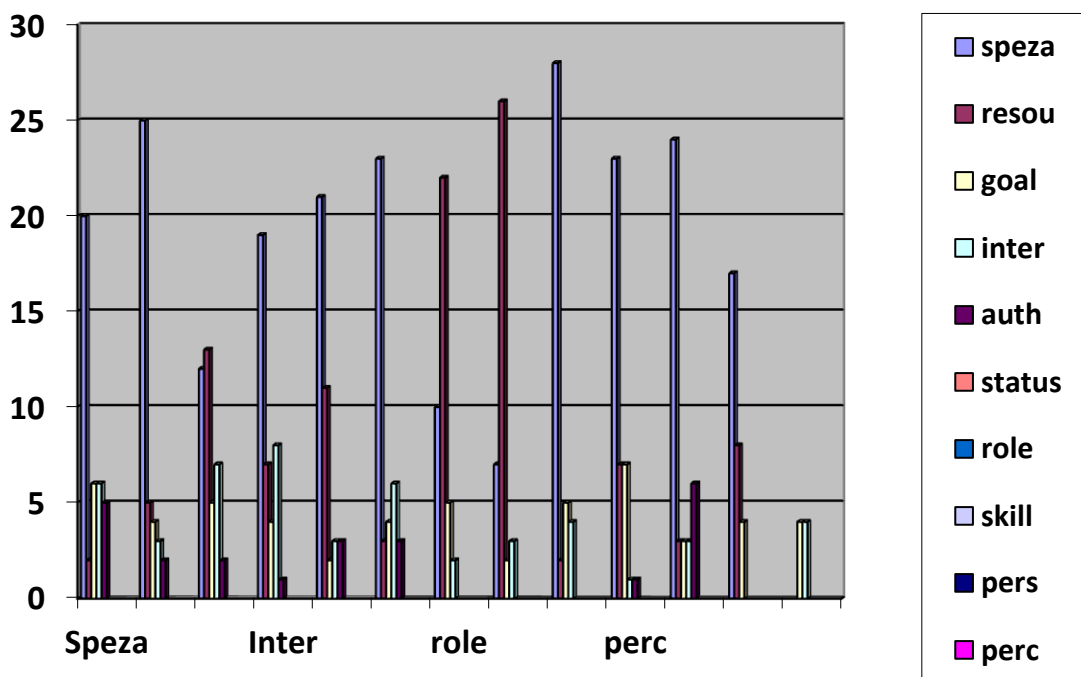


Fig-1: Sources of conflict

Source: Survey 2016

On specialisation 51% of the respondents gave a rating of 5, 5% of the respondents gave a rating of 4, 15% of the respondents gave a rating of 3, 15% gave a rating of 2 and 13% gave a rating of 1. Thus, specialisation was given a high rating thus it's a source of conflict. On common resources, majority of respondents gave a rating of 64% of 5, thus it's a high rating as a source of conflict. With regards to goal difference, 31% of the respondents gave a rating of 5, and 33% gave a rating of 4, thus, these are high rating, thus goal difference is a source of conflict. On interdependence 49% of the respondents gave a rating of 5, and 18% of the respondents gave a rating of 4, thus, these are high rating, thus interdependence is a source of conflict.

With respect to authority relationship as a source of conflict, majority of respondents (54%) gave a rating 5. Thus, authority relationship is a source of conflict. On status differences, majority of respondents (59%) of respondents gave a rating of 5. Thus, authority relationships are a source of conflict. On roles and expectation, majority of respondents (56%) gave a rating of 4, hence authority relationships are a source of conflict.

With regards to skills and abilities, majority of respondents (66%) gave a rating of 4, on rating skills and abilities as a source of conflict. Thus, skills and

abilities are source of conflict. On personality as a source of conflict, majority of respondents (72%) of the respondents gave a rating of 5 when rating personality as a source of conflict, hence, personality is a source of conflict. In terms of perception as a source of conflict, 59% of the respondents gave perception a high rating of 5 as a source of conflict, thus perception is a source of conflict. On personal problems, majority of respondents (62%) gave a rating of 5 in rating personal problems as a source of conflict, thus, personal problems are a source of conflict. With regards to communication problems as a source of conflict (44%) respondents gave of 4, and 21% of the respondents gave a rating of 4 in rating communication problems as a source of conflict, thus respondents revealed that communication is a source of conflict.

Overall analysis shows that respondents revealed the sources of conflict at MYIEE as specialisation, common resources, goal differences, interdependence, authority relationships, status difference, roles and expectations, skills and abilities, personality, perceptions, personal problems and communication problems.

Type of conflict at work

This question sought to determine the type of conflict that employees experience at their workplace.

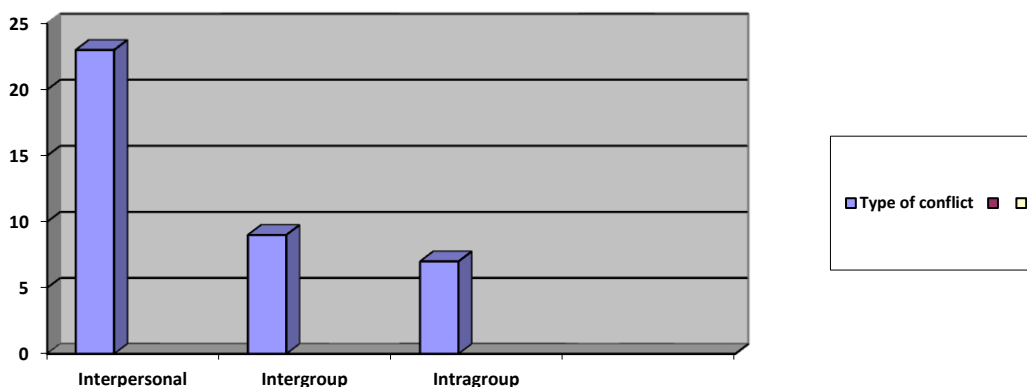


Fig-2: Type of conflict
Source: Survey 2016

From the survey, 59% of the respondents revealed that the type of conflict at the workplace is interpersonal, 23% respondents revealed that the type of conflict they have at the workplace is intergroup, and 18% of the respondents revealed that the type of conflict they have is intra-group. Thus analysis depicts that the conflict that employees at MYIEE are experiencing is interpersonal.

Conflict handling styles

From 25 questions, respondents were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement and disagreement in the appropriate box to score each statement. Never = 1 Seldom = 2 Sometimes = 3 often = 4 Always = 5

Scoring on the following questions

Table-4: Conflict handling styles

A	B	C	D	E
1 _____	2 _____	3 _____	4 _____	5 _____
6 _____	7 _____	8 _____	9 _____	10 _____
11 _____	12 _____	13 _____	14 _____	15 _____
16 _____	17 _____	18 _____	19 _____	20 _____
21 _____	22 _____	23 _____	24 _____	25 _____
Avoidance	Competition	Compromise	Accommodation	Collaboration
Totals	Totals	Totals	Totals	Totals

Scores from 21 to 25 are representative of a very strong style.
 Scores from 15 to 20 are representative of a strong style.
 Scores from 11 to 15 are representative of an average style.
 Scores from 6 to 10 are representative of a weak style.
 Scores from 0 to 5 are representative of a very weak style.

DATA ANALYSIS

Avoidance conflict handling style

Statistical analysis revealed that the mean score for avoidance conflict handling style is 14.13, the median score is 13 and the modal score is 6. Thus, interpretation of the scores provided by respondents show that employees at MYIEE use avoidance conflict handling style on an average basis when using the mean and the median. When using the modal statistical analysis, it shows that they use a weak style when avoiding conflict.

Competition conflict handling style

For the results obtained from statistical analysis of scores by respondents, the mean score 15.59, the median score is 16 and the modal score is 12. Hence, interpreting the respondents using the mean and modal scores, it shows that respondents use strong style when competing on conflict. Thus using the mean and median statistical analysis it shows that employees at MYIEE use a strong style when competing on conflict. Interpreting the scores using the modal score, it shows that respondents use an average style when handling conflict using the competition style.

Compromise conflict handling style

Statistical analysis of the data showed that or compromise conflict handling style, the mean score 15.45, the median score is 15 and the modal score is also 15. Thus data analysis shows that all the three scores respondents at MYIEE use a strong compromise conflict handling style. Hence, employees compromise well when they are in a conflict situation at MYIEE.

Accommodation conflict handling style

Statistical analysis of the data showed that the scores when using the accommodation conflict handling style are as follows: mean score is 17.15, the median score is 19 and the modal score is 22. When interpreting the scores using the mean and median scores, it shows that respondents use a strong accommodation conflict handling style. When using the modal score, respondents use very strong accommodation conflict handling style.

Collaboration conflict handling style

Data analysis using statistical methods revealed that when using collaboration conflict handling style, the mean score 12.41, the median score is 12, and the modal score is 9. Hence, data interpretation suggested that when using the mean and median scores, respondents at MYIEE use an average collaboration conflict handling style. When using the modal score, respondents at MYIEE uses a weak conflict handling style.

Overall analysis on conflict handling styles suggested that, from the range of available conflict handling style identified above which are: avoidance, accommodation, completion, compromise and collaboration conflict handling style, one conflict handling style which is collaboration ensures maximum organisational performance. However, the collaboration conflict handling style is being used by respondents on a weak style and on an average style.

CONCLUSIONS

The research investigated the conflict management strategies in the Ministry of Youth and Economic Empowerment. The following conclusions are drawn:

- The sources of conflict are shortage of resources, goal differences, status difference as well as personalities.
- Conflict immensely affects the performance of the workers and management.
- Conflict management strategies used are not very effective to totally eradicate dysfunctional conflict in the organisation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the above findings and conclusions, the study recommends the following:

- Management has to engage in training of employees on conflict issues.
- There is need to improve communication when managing conflict.

- The management should also use conflict management styles that promote cooperation and collaboration among the workers.

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