

Workplace Dynamics: Conflict and Employee Performance in the Nigerian Petroleum Regulatory Authority

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study explored how workplace conflict influences employee performance in the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority Southeast.

Methodology: The study adopted a survey design and quantitative approach to collect data from 127 employees of the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority in the Southeast region of Nigeria. Data were collected, statistically tested, and analyzed using the partial least square (Ordinary Least Regression) method with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 25 software) at a 5% level of significance.

Findings: The results of research hypothesis one showed that workplace conflict had an insignificant influence on team creativity. The results of research hypothesis two revealed that interpersonal conflict had a significant influence on team creativity. The study offers the following suggestions. Managers are advised to introduce diversity training programs across all levels and units to orient workers to develop interpersonal skills necessary to accommodate people from diverse backgrounds.

Originality/Value: This study is one of the earliest to explore the influence of interpersonal and task conflict on team creativity using the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority in the Southeast region of Nigeria. This study developed a regression model showing the equation relating workplace conflict variables-(interpersonal and task conflict) and employee performance variables (team creativity).

Keywords: Workplace Conflict, Job Demand Resources Model, Task Conflict, Interpersonal Conflict, Team Creativity, Southeast Region.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background Information

Workplace conflict is an inevitable phenomenon that can significantly affect employee performance. Workplace conflict is a necessary component of organizational dynamics and results from variations in employee goals, values, and interpersonal relationships. Resolving conflicts at work through proactive communication, providing conflict resolution training, and encouraging an environment of open discussion can greatly lessen the detrimental effects that conflict has on worker performance (Robbins & Judge, 2022; De Dreu, 2020). Employers that put money into dispute resolution techniques and foster a positive work environment are better able to raise employee engagement and improve job satisfaction in general. Organizations may promote a better work environment and enhance individual and team performance by identifying and resolving conflicts constructively.

Employee performance refers to a person's effectiveness in carrying out their tasks and responsibilities at work (Litmos, 2023). Performance is crucial to an organization's success and boosts employee morale and productivity. Companies can identify areas that need improvement, provide aid and training to employees, and ensure that everyone is working toward the same goals by routinely evaluating employee performance.

The relationship between workplace conflict and employee performance is complex and multifaceted. While some types of conflict can potentially enhance performance through improved problem-solving, the general trend indicates that unmanaged conflict tends to have detrimental effects. Many studies have investigated the relationship between different types of conflict (e.g., interpersonal, task-related) on various performance outcomes. Recent studies by Adewole, Ogunyemi, and Otapo (2019) using a case study of a Nigerian bottling company found that, conflict management aids in the improvement of organizational performance. A similar study by Widjaja, Paskah, Putrawan, and Manik (2023) using students from Different Customs and Cultures at a Theological School in Indonesia found that interpersonal conflict contributes positively to the aggressive behavior of students from different customs and cultures. A recent study by Ayoko et

al. (2020) found that employees with higher emotional intelligence are better equipped to handle conflicts, thereby minimizing adverse impacts on performance. Zhang et al. (2019), have explored the moderating effects of leadership styles on the relationship between conflict and performance. They found that transformational leadership can buffer the negative impacts of conflict by fostering a supportive and inclusive work environment. De Dreu and Gelfand (2008) found that unmanaged conflict can lead to decreased organizational performance due to increased absenteeism, turnover, and decreased morale. Jehn (1995) found that interpersonal conflict, characterized by personal disputes, typically leads to negative outcomes, such as reduced job satisfaction and lower productivity.

Recent research emphasizes the role of emotional intelligence, conflict management strategies, and leadership in mitigating these negative impacts. As workplaces continue to evolve, ongoing research is essential to develop more effective ways of managing conflict and enhancing performance. Considering the above, no studies have previously investigated the effects of task conflict, and interpersonal conflict on team creativity in the Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission Southeast, Nigeria. This study aims to fill this knowledge gap.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Disagreement at work is peculiar to any organization in NMDPRA Southeast. Workplace conflict can arise from diverse factors, unclear job roles, interpersonal differences, leadership issues, poor communication, and resource allocations. The overall effect of these conflicts would increase staff emotional stress, diminish job quality and working relationships, and negatively impede communication within a team and the well-being of those involved. The unresolved conflict would increase psychological injuries which has a negative influence on team creativity. Again, interpersonal conflict would grow into bigger issues, causing a rise in accusations of harassment and discrimination, and reputational damage to the company. Positive conflict at work can result in a more in-depth or robust discussion of the issue for a better solution. Therefore, increased emotional stress that stems from unresolved interpersonal conflict can politicize the workplace. The inability to control tasks or interpersonal conflict can negatively influence employees' responsiveness and team creativity. Finally, the negative effects of interpersonal, cognitive, and task conflict management at work would lead to increased absenteeism, turnover, unionization, and litigation. If not well managed, conflict would decrease employee performance vis-à-vis team creativity, team morale, employee responsiveness, and engagement.

1.2 Research Objectives

The broad objective of this study is to determine the extent to which workplace conflict can affect employee performance in the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA) Southeast, Nigeria.

The following specific objectives were drawn from the above driver variables:

- I. Determine the extent to which task conflict stimulates team creativity.
- II. Investigate the extent to which interpersonal conflict influences team creativity.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the conduct of the study:

- I. To what extent does task conflict stimulate team creativity?
- II. Does interpersonal conflict influence team creativity?

1.4 Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁: Task conflict does not significantly stimulate team creativity.

H₀₂: Interpersonal conflict does not significantly influence team creativity.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The geographic coverage of this study is limited to five states in Southeast Nigeria. The study adopted a survey design and quantitative approach to collect data from 127 employees of the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority in the Southeast region of Nigeria. Data were collected, statistically tested, and analyzed using Partial Least Square (Ordinary Least Regression) method with the aid of Statistical Package on Social Science (SPSS version 25 software) at a 5% level of significance.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 The Concept of Workplace Conflict

Honeyman (2013) defined workplace conflict as any type of conflict that takes place within a workplace or among workers and/or managers, potentially including conflict between employees outside of

work hours. The author contends that workplace conflict is used to describe the interpersonal or employer-employee conflict in a workplace that does not involve a union, or an allegation of discrimination based on race, gender, or another legally protected criterion; but a more rigorous definition would include any of these elements.

Workplace Conflict is described as the resort to the use of force and armed struggle in the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by contending groups or individuals (Oraegbunam, 2006). In other words, for conflict to occur, individuals must perceive a situation against each other or among themselves irrespective of the accurate or inaccurate nature of that perception of the situation. Nonetheless, whenever such perceptions are held, they are usually negative, and the contending matter must be something parties involved have a common interest or desire. Most often, neither of the contending parties would like to be shortchanged in the matter. Recent studies highlight that unresolved conflicts can lead to decreased job satisfaction, higher turnover rates, and reduced productivity (Jones & George, 2022). Conversely, when managed effectively, conflict can foster innovation, improve decision-making, and enhance team dynamics (Smith & Tjosvold, 2023). Understanding the dynamics of workplace conflict and implementing effective conflict resolution strategies are thus crucial for maintaining a productive and harmonious work environment (Robinson et al., 2023). Addressing these conflicts promptly can help mitigate their adverse effects and harness their potential benefits, ultimately contributing to improved employee performance and organizational success.

2.1.2 Task Conflict

It is a type of conflict that can occur between two or more people that relates to the completion of a specific task (Mahr & Grimsley, 2022). The author contends that task conflict can arise from differences in opinion about how the task should be completed or from different levels of commitment to completing the task. Task conflict can also occur when one person feels that they are doing more work than the other(s) on the task.

A task conflict arises when superiors disagree about what needs to be done or the project's objective (Goel, 2022). Task conflict can take many different forms, including managing expectations at work, debating how to divide resources, arguing over rules and regulations, discerning, and presenting the truth, and practical concerns about employees' work assignments. Conflict may appear to be the most straightforward to resolve.

Task conflict is defined as disagreements among team members about the content and outcomes of the tasks being performed. (Jehn & Mannix, 2022). It can stimulate critical thinking and diverse perspectives, leading to enhanced creativity when managed constructively. The relationship between task conflict and team creativity has garnered significant attention in recent organizational research, highlighting a nuanced dynamic where conflict can either hinder or enhance creative outcomes.

Recent studies indicate that moderate levels of task conflict encourage teams to re-evaluate their approaches and develop innovative solutions (Bradley, Klotz, Postlethwaite, & Brown, 2023). However, excessive task conflict can become detrimental, leading to frustration and decreased team cohesion (Dijkstra, van Dierendonck, & Evers, 2023). Therefore, the impact of task conflict on team creativity largely depends on the conflict management strategies employed and the team's ability to maintain a collaborative environment (Tsai & Chi, 2023).

2.1.3 Interpersonal Conflict

Interpersonal disputes arise when there is a difference of opinion between two or more people (Risser, 2022). Disagreements frequently stem from shared goals, values, perspectives, or resources. Interpersonal conflicts can happen anywhere there are people present, including at work, home, school, and in personal or professional relationships. According to the author's opinion interpersonal conflict is a common and everyday occurrence. When more than one person is involved, there will always be divergent values, opinions, and thoughts. The distinctions among people make them special. People can resolve their differences through conflict, and on rare occasions, this can result in a win-win outcome and a stronger, more positive relationship. Interpersonal conflict occurs when two or more interdependent parties perceive and experience a struggle over opposed goals, constrained resources, and external interference with their goals (Hocker and Wilmot, 2018; Resilia, 2023). Interpersonal conflict occurs in part because individuals are connected and depend on one another.

Interpersonal conflict, characterized by personal disagreements and emotional clashes among team members, generally has a detrimental effect on team creativity. Recent research indicates that such conflict often leads to negative emotions, reduced trust, and impaired communication, which can stifle creative processes and collaboration within teams (Yang, Johnson, & Mossholder, 2023). Specifically, interpersonal conflict can divert attention away from task-related activities and towards managing personal grievances, thereby reducing the cognitive resources available for creative thinking (De Dreu & Weingart, 2022). Moreover, persistent

interpersonal conflicts can create a hostile work environment, diminishing team morale and cohesion, which are crucial for fostering innovation (Jiang, Zhang, & Tjosvold, 2023). Consequently, the presence of interpersonal conflict is typically associated with lower levels of team creativity unless effectively mitigated through conflict resolution strategies that restore trust and collaboration (Ng & Feldman, 2023).

2.1.4 Employee Performance

Employee performance refers to a person's effectiveness in carrying out their tasks and responsibilities at work (Litmos, 2023). Employee performance is defined as how well a person executes their job duties and responsibilities. Many companies assess their employees' performance on an annual or quarterly basis to define certain areas that need improvement and to encourage further success in areas that are meeting or exceeding expectations. Performance is a critical factor in organizational success, helping to improve overall productivity, profitability, and employee morale. By assessing employee performance regularly, companies can identify areas that need improvement, provide support and training to employees, and ensure that everyone is working towards the same goals.

Recent studies emphasize that factors such as job satisfaction, engagement, and organizational support significantly influence performance outcomes (Bakker & Demerouti, 2023). High-performing employees tend to exhibit greater productivity, creativity, and commitment to organizational goals, which are essential for competitive advantage (Saks, 2023). Additionally, performance management systems that include clear expectations, continuous feedback, and opportunities for development have been shown to enhance employee performance (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023). Organizations that invest in creating a supportive and motivating work environment thus see substantial improvements in individual and collective performance metrics.

2.1.5 Team Creativity

Creativity is the ability to come up with unexpected, original ideas and solutions (Fridman, 2023). According to the author, it is an integral element of innovation. One of the ways to foster team creativity is by open communication in the workplace. Encouraging people to share their thoughts (ideas and opinions) generates creative solutions in the workplace. Another way to enhance team creativity is to facilitate diverse ways of working in groups or teams. Some people prefer to work in teams, while others prefer to work alone. Creativity increases when you give people job autonomy, that is, allowing them to choose how they would work if they do their job more effectively.

Men, Fong, Luo, Zhong, and Huo (2019) defined team creativity as the development of novel and useful ideas that are relevant to products, services, processes, and procedures by a team of employees working together. Team Creativity refers to team members considering disparate views, collectively processing information, and eventually producing creative outcomes (Dong, Bartol, Zhang, Li, 2016).

Research by Zhou and Hoever (2023) indicates that a supportive work environment that encourages risk-taking and provides autonomy significantly boosts employee creativity, which in turn enhances overall performance. Additionally, Shalley and Gilson (2023) found that when employees are given opportunities for creative expression, their job satisfaction and productivity levels tend to increase, leading to higher performance metrics. Another study by Amabile and Pratt (2023) highlights the role of intrinsic motivation, suggesting that employees who find their work intrinsically rewarding are more likely to engage in creative problem-solving and perform better. These findings underscore the importance of fostering an organizational culture that values and promotes creativity as a pathway to improved employee performance.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Job Demand Resources model, developed by Demerouti et al. (2001). The theory explains how job demands and resources influence employee performance and well-being. According to the JD-R model, job demands (such as workload, and interpersonal conflicts) can lead to stress and burnout if not balanced with adequate job resources (support, and autonomy). High levels of unresolved conflict increase job demands, which can reduce employee performance due to stress and decreased motivation. Conversely, job resources can buffer the negative effects of conflict, leading to enhanced performance and engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

However, some scholars have criticized the job demand resources model due to oversimplification, static nature, context dependence, and lack of consideration for personal factors for several reasons. Schaufeli and Taris (2014) argued that the JD-R model's categorization of job demands and resources may be too simplistic. Real-world work environments often involve complex interactions between various factors that cannot be easily classified into demands and resources. Dewe (2016) has criticized the model due to its static nature. The scholar argued that the theory primarily focuses on the present state of job demands and resources, potentially overlooking the dynamic and evolving nature of work environments and how demands and resources

may change over time. The model may not adequately account for contextual factors such as organizational culture, industry-specific characteristics, and individual differences. For example, what constitutes a resource in one context might be a demand in another, making the model less universally applicable (Johnston et al., 2013). While the JD-R model acknowledges job demands and resources, it does not fully integrate personal factors such as personality traits, coping mechanisms, and individual resilience, which can significantly influence how employees perceive and respond to job demands and resources (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007).

Despite criticisms, the JD-R model is highly flexible and applicable across various occupational settings. It has been successfully applied to understand employee well-being and performance in diverse fields such as healthcare, education, and corporate environments (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). The JD-R model has been empirically validated and shown to predict important outcomes such as burnout, engagement, and job performance. This makes it a valuable tool for organizations seeking to understand and improve employee outcomes (Bakker et al., 2014).

The JD-R model is relevant to this study on workplace conflict and employee performance because it can be useful in understanding employee well-being and predicting employee performance.

2.3 Empirical Review

Several researchers have researched workplace conflict and employee performance of Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA) Southeast, Nigeria. Some of these studies done on this subject in Nigeria and the rest of the world are stated below.

Lee, Avgar, Park, and Choi (2019) explored the dual effects of task conflict on team creativity and the role of team-focused transformational leadership (TFL) as a key contingency in the task conflict–team creativity relationship in South Korea. Data were collected from 325 teams across ten large companies in South Korea. The study tested the hypothesized moderated mediation model using an SPSS macro. Results showed that task conflict is directly and positively related to team creativity and is negatively and indirectly related to team creativity via relationship conflict.

Liu, Li, Li, Bruk-Lee, Ma, and Liu (2022) examined the relationship between supervisor–employee task conflict, and supervisor ostracism, as well as the moderating effect of supervisors' and employees' interpersonal harmony values using Chinese firms. Primary data were collected from the 449 participants from the Department of Maintenance and Engineering of a Chinese airline company. From the supervisors' perspective, the study found that supervisor–employee task conflict was positively related to supervisor ostracism, and this relationship was buffered by supervisor HE. From the employees' perspective, the study also found that supervisor ostracism was positively related to employee depression and negatively related to job performance.

Singh, Phoolka, Mango, and Bale (2021) examined the mediation effect of interpersonal conflict between the relation of interpersonal communication and workplace deviance in North India. 233 doctors were selected from hospitals in the tri-city. In the study, partial least squares (PLS) and structural equation modeling (SEM) were used to test the hypotheses. It was found that interpersonal conflict was specifically correlated adversely with interpersonal communication and favorably with workplace deviance. Further, the findings showed that interpersonal conflict significantly indirectly affected the relationship between interpersonal communication and workplace deviance.

Longe (2015) analyzed the impact of workplace conflict management on organizational performance using the Nigerian Manufacturing firm study that adopted a structured questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The questionnaires were administered to a population of 250 employees of manufacturing firms. Data were analyzed using the regression method to generate the result. The finding showed that the collective bargaining strategy has a significant influence on organizational performance.

Oluremi and Ajua (2018) investigated conflict management strategies in a tertiary institution in Ondo State. The study adopted a descriptive approach using the questionnaire as an instrument for data collection. The total population of the study is composed of 210 employees. Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, analysis of variance, and multiple regressions to generate study results. Findings showed that role conflict occurred between academic staff and professional administrators and conflict management strategies were critical variables in the school system.

Ugwu, Kekeocha, and Chukwu (2018) examined the impact of work-family conflict on the career advancement of female professionals in Commercial Banks of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. This study adopted a correlation survey design to test the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The total population of the study comprised 84 female staff of the following organizations: First Bank, United Bank for Africa, Access Bank, and Fidelity Bank. The target population of the study comprised female workers of the selected organizations. The study hypothesis was statistically tested and analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Findings showed that there exists a significant positive relationship between work-family conflict (family obligation) and the career advancement of female professionals.

Paskewitz (2021) explored the impact of emotional intelligence on family farm member conflict experiences in the USA. The population of the study was mainly individual family farm members located in the United States. Data were collected through an online survey of the participants in two ways, through email Facebook, and personal contacts. 204 family farm members participated in this study. The hypotheses were tested using hierarchical regression and correlation techniques with the aid of SPSS version 26 for data analysis. Findings showed that awareness of own emotions, management of own emotions, and management of others' emotions negatively predicted task, relational, process, and status conflict.

Previous studies did not investigate the influence of workplace conflict on employees' performance in the Petroleum Regulatory Authority, South-East Region, Nigeria. This is the gap the present study seeks to fill.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

A research design is the framework or methods a researcher uses to conduct various types of research (Edu, 2020). A correlational research design was used to examine the influence of workplace conflict on employee performance in the Downstream Petroleum Industry, in Southeast, Nigeria.

3.2 Method of Data Collection

Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires administered by the researcher in person. The questionnaire consists of 42 items measured using a five-point Likert scale varying from; strongly agree (SA=1), agree (AG=2), undecided (UN=3), disagree (DA=4), and strongly disagree (SD= 5). In addition, Table 4 also shows the questionnaire containing statements on task conflict on team creativity; and interpersonal conflict on employee engagement of Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA) Southeast.

3.3 The Population of the Study

The study population is a subset of the target population from which the actual sample is taken. According to Hu (2014), the sample frame is an operationalized representation of the study population. The study's total population was made up of staff of the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA) Southeast. The geographic coverage comprises Imo and Abia State.

3.4 Sampling Size and Sampling Technique

The Taro Yamane formula for a finite population was used to calculate the sample size. This can be expressed mathematically as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where; n = Sample Size; N = Population Size; e = Error of significance 5% (0.05); 1 = Constant

$$n = \frac{223}{1 + 223(0.05)^2} \quad n = 143.178 = 143$$

To distribute the questionnaire to the selected firm, the formula for Bowler's proportional allocation method was used, with 143 as the sample size. The Bowlers proportional allocation formula is stated below as follows:

$$nh = \frac{nNh}{N}$$

Where nh = Bowley's allocation formula
 Nh = Number of items in each stratum in the population.
 n = Sample size
 N = Population size

Applying the formula, we have:

$$\text{Imo State} \quad nh = \frac{143(120)}{223} = 76.95 = 77$$

$$\text{Abia State} \quad = \frac{143(103)}{223} = 66.05 = 66$$

3.5 The Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Both the face and content validity were examined using an expert to ensure that the instrument adequately covers the subject in which the researcher is interested. The data was analyzed using Cronbach's

Alpha to determine the instrument's internal consistency. To get the internal consistency, the questionnaire underwent a pilot test that served as a trial run to determine the effectiveness of the instrument. The reliability assessment was performed using alpha and a result of 0.831 showed sufficient proof of the instrument's dependability. The test result obtained was greater than 60%, demonstrating the instrument's high level of dependability.

Table i: Reliability Statistics

| | | |
|------------------|--|------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
| .831 | .861 | 12 |

Source: (SPSS Version 25).

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

The research hypothesis was statistically analyzed using the ordinary Least Square (OLS) method. A decision rule was used to decide whether to accept or reject the null and alternate (H_0 , H_A) hypotheses when the p-value was less than or higher than the critical value at 5% level of significance.

3.8 Model Specification

The general model is stated below:

$$Y_{it} = \alpha + \beta_0 X_{it} + \mu_{it} \dots\dots\dots 1$$

Where,

Y_{it} = dependent variable; β_0 = Intercept; X_{it} = Independent Variable

μ_{it} = error terms; i = number of firms; t = number of time periods

The model is further specified as;

$$TCV = \beta_0_{it} + \beta_1 IPC + \beta_2 TCF + \mu_{it} \dots\dots\dots 2$$

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Data Presentation and Description

The primary objective of the study is to ascertain how workplace conflict influenced employee performance at Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission Southeast, Nigeria. Out of 142 copies of questionnaires given to the respondents, only 127 were completed and returned; the other 15 were not returned and were used in the analysis.

Table ii: Questionnaire Response Rate

| S/N | Nigerian Downstream Regulatory Commission | Population | Copies Distributed | Copies Filled and Returned |
|-----|---|------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | Owerri Regional Office | 120 | 76 | 69 |
| 2 | Abia | 103 | 66 | 58 |
| | Total | 223 | 142 | 127 |

Source: (Field Survey, 2023).

4.2 Analysis of Research Question One

i). To what extent does task conflict stimulate team creativity?

Participants' answers to research question 1 are shown in Table 4 based on five-point Likert scales. Instruction: Please tick (✓) a response according to your own opinion using; strongly agree (SA=5), agree (AG=4), undecided (UN=3), disagree (DA=2), and strongly disagree (SD=1).

Table iii: Investigative Questions on Task Conflict and Team Creativity

| S/N | ITEMS | SA | AG | UN | DA | SD | Total |
|-----------|---|----|----|----|----|----|-------|
| A. | Task Conflict-Independent Variable, X1 | 63 | 46 | 14 | 1 | 3 | 127 |
| 1. | Conflict is common in my organization. | 58 | 52 | 11 | 4 | 2 | 127 |
| 2. | Our diverse perspectives can spark disagreement | 59 | 54 | 9 | 3 | 2 | 127 |
| 3. | Unresolved task conflict can affect a company's reputation. | 60 | 56 | 7 | 1 | 3 | 127 |
| 4. | Conflict can lead to emotional stress. | 51 | 59 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 127 |
| 5. | Arguments and annoyance can arise from teamwork. | 53 | 61 | 7 | 3 | 3 | 127 |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------|---|----|----|----|---|---|-----|
| 6. | Unsettled misunderstandings can put the team’s goal at risk. | 57 | 55 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 127 |
| 7. | Decisions are approved collectively. | 63 | 46 | 14 | 1 | 3 | 127 |
| B. | Interpersonal Conflict- Independent Variable, X2 | | | | | | |
| 8. | Increased conflict can lead to high turnover. | 56 | 61 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 127 |
| 9. | Unresolved conflict can reduce group interrelationships. | 60 | 52 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 127 |
| 10. | My team always strives to meet their goals. | 62 | 52 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 127 |
| 11. | Interpersonal conflict would lead to psychological stress. | 58 | 59 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 127 |
| 12. | Sometimes, disagreement can stem from teamwork. | 57 | 56 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 127 |
| 13. | My firm adheres to environmental standards | 53 | 61 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 127 |
| 14. | Working together helps workers to build team spirit. | 60 | 64 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 127 |
| C. | Team Creativity- Dependent Variable, Y | | | | | | |
| 8. | We maintain equality and a diverse workplace. | 57 | 55 | 6 | 8 | 1 | 127 |
| 9. | Teams with diverse backgrounds can generate new ideas. | 52 | 59 | 8 | 6 | 2 | 127 |
| 10. | Problem-solving ability can increase when | 54 | 53 | 4 | 9 | 7 | 127 |
| 11. | Sometimes, disagreement can spark innovation. | 57 | 59 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 127 |
| 12. | We brainstorm to reach appropriate decisions. | 61 | 55 | 7 | 2 | 2 | 127 |
| 13. | Our culture encourages team collaboration and reward. | 70 | 54 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 127 |
| 14. | Frequent arguments and quarrels can diminish working relationships within a team. | 58 | 57 | 5 | 7 | 1 | 127 |

Source: (Field Survey, 2023).

4.2.1 Test of Hypothesis One

Ho₁: Task conflict does not significantly influence team creativity.

Ho₂: Interpersonal conflict does not significantly influence team creativity.

4.2.2. Decision Rule

Reject the null hypothesis when the p-value is less than 0.05; otherwise, accept the alternative hypothesis (HA). Table vi displays the results of the hypothesis test conducted using the Ordinary Least Square (OLS) method. Considering the p-value. The null hypothesis one— task conflict does not influence team creativity was accepted because the p-value (.127) is greater than the critical value (0.05); while the alternate hypothesis— that task conflict influences team creativity was rejected. In addition, the null hypothesis two— interpersonal conflict does not influence team creativity was rejected because the p-value (.002) was less than the critical value (0.05); while the alternate hypothesis that interpersonal conflict does not influence team creativity was accepted.

Table iv: Model Summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .984 ^a | .968 | .966 | 4.88777 |

Table v: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)^a

| Model | | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 23230.081 | 1 | 11615.040 | 486.182 | .000 ^b |
| | Residual | 764.490 | 126 | 23.890 | | |
| | Total | 23994.571 | 127 | | | |

Source: (SPSS Version 25)

a. Dependent Variable: TCV (team creativity)

a. Predictors: (Constants), IPC, TCF

IPC represents Interpersonal Conflict; TCF represents Task Conflict

Table vi: Result of Ordinary Least Square (OLS) Regression Coefficients

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. |
|-------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | .399 | 1.179 | | .399 | .737 |
| | TCF | .317 | .203 | .307 | 1.566 | .127 |
| | IPC | .667 | .193 | .679 | 3.463 | .002 |

Source: (SPSS Version 25)

a. Dependent Variable: TCV

Interpretation of Result

The regression result presented in Table vi above shows that IPC is statistically significant at 5%, while TCF is not.

Therefore, the regression estimate is thus stated as:

$$TCV = .399 + .667 IPC + .317 TCF \dots\dots\dots 3$$

It is clear from the regression coefficient that interpersonal conflict (IPC) exerts a stronger significant influence on team creativity (TCV) than task conflict (TCF). This result also demonstrates that interpersonal friction or conflict can open team members' minds to new ideas and prompt them to develop more creative solutions. Instead, task conflict might cause team members to focus too much on their disagreements, obstructing their capacity to come up with original solutions and solve problems.

Again, the R² value of .968 of the model summaries above indicates that the independent variables, interpersonal conflict, IPC, and team conflict (TCF) explained 96.8 percent of the variations in the dependent variable, team creativity, or TCV. Thus, we can safely infer that the regression model has a high predictive power which indicates that the result is reliable and is accurate with a perfect match of the data. The adjusted R² (R-square) value is also shown as .966; this means that interpersonal conflict and team conflict (the explanatory) accounts for 96.6 percent of changes in team creativity, with the remaining 3.4 percent being explained by variables not included in the model. Furthermore, the ANOVA regression result demonstrates the suitability of the model with F= 486.182 and 0.000 significance, supporting the accuracy of the findings in Table 6 above.

4.5. Discussion of Result

The study's broad objective is to evaluate how workplace conflict affects employee performance at the Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission, Southeast Nigeria. Research hypotheses one and two were tested statistically using the ordinary least square method shown in Table vi above. Since the p-value (.127) was greater than the critical value at a 5 % level of significance, the null hypothesis, which states that task conflict does not influence team creativity, was accepted. It was discovered that task conflict does not impart team creativity. This is because excessive task conflict can lead to inefficiency, frustration, and delays, hindering the team's ability to meet deadlines and achieve goals.

In a similar vein, the ordinary least square method was used to test hypothesis two in Table vi above. Since the p-value (.002) was less than the critical value at a 5 % level of significance, the null hypothesis (Ho), which states that interpersonal conflict significantly influences team creativity, was rejected. In contrast, the alternative hypothesis (HA2), which states that interpersonal conflict significantly impacts team creativity, was therefore accepted. The research established that interpersonal conflict significantly imparts creativity.

V. CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND FURTHER STUDIES

5.1 Summary of Findings

The summary of the findings is as follows:

- I. Findings of research hypothesis one found that task conflict had an insignificant influence on team creativity.
- II. Findings of research hypothesis two showed that interpersonal conflict had a strong significant influence on team creativity.

5.2 Conclusion

The main aim of this study is to determine how workplace conflict affects the operational performance of the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority, NMDPRA. The result of research hypothesis one established that task conflict had an insignificant influence on team creativity. This is because excessive task conflict can lead to inefficiency, frustration, and delays, hindering the team's ability to meet deadlines and achieve goals. This result agrees with the previous work of Liu et al., (2022) which states that employee task conflict is negatively related to job performance. The findings of the study are supported by recent studies by Jones and George (2022) which showed that unresolved conflicts can lead to decreased job satisfaction, higher turnover rates, and reduced productivity. This finding is in harmony with the previous work of Kim and O'Reilly, (2023) which explained that persistent task conflict can lead to heightened tension and discomfort among team members, which can negatively affect the work environment and interpersonal relations. In addition, the result of research hypothesis two confirms that interpersonal conflict has a strong significant influence on team creativity. This result is in harmony with the previous work of; Nein and Timinepere (2023) who revealed that interpersonal relation promotes employee teams, and divisional task performance in the Nigerian Police Force. This result is supported by the previous work of Smith and Brown (2023) which indicates

that moderate interpersonal conflict can stimulate discussion and enhance problem-solving capabilities in the healthcare sector.

Considering the above, the study establishes that workplace conflict influences both positively and negatively on employee performance. The findings also demonstrate that interpersonal friction can open team members' minds to new ideas and prompt them to come up with more creative solutions. Instead, task conflict might cause team members to focus too much on their disagreements, which can obstruct their capacity to come up with original solutions and solve problems.

5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations were made below.

- I. Managers and employees should be trained in conflict resolution techniques, communication skills, and emotional intelligence to orient workers to accommodate people from diverse backgrounds.
- II. Creating clear communication channels among employees can reduce misunderstandings and foster a culture where they feel comfortable expressing concerns, thus preventing conflicts from escalating.
- III. Organizations are advised to introduce strict measures to control and monitor workplace behaviors such as bullying and harassment among workers to create a friendly work environment.
- IV. Managers should deploy effective conflict management strategies, to ensure that employee performance remains optimal and that organizational goals are met.
- V. Managers of NMDPRA should develop formal conflict resolution systems, such as mediation and arbitration, to resolve issues emanating from conflict swiftly and prevent escalation.

5.4 Practical Implication of Study

The results of this study would enrich the awareness of Nigerian stakeholders on conflict management matters. By extension, it will provoke the necessity for proactive measures to tackle conflict situations in the country. The study's findings would help strengthen the relationship between host communities and the federal government necessary for a conducive environment promoting socio-economic activities in the country.

5.5 Future Research

The main purpose of this study is to find out how workplace conflict affects employee performance at the Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission, Southeast Nigeria. Future research could compare the impact of workplace conflict on employee performance in other sectors and regions of Nigeria to identify regional variations and tailor conflict resolution strategies accordingly.

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