CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND STAFF PERFORMANCE IN USSA LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICE OF TARABA STATE

BY

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background of the Study

One of the central focus of management as a distinct field of study is improving staff performance. In fact, management theories are geared toward creating structures in organizations that will enhance the performance of staff. Staff performance determines the turnover and achievement of organizational goals. Based on this, Nwachukwu (1988) asserted that organizations spend millions of naira every year in order to recruit employees who are best suited for their positions. These are people who are expected to produce (i.e perform) according to, or exceed, predetermined standards (Nwachukwu, 1998).

In local government councils, staff performance is an essential element that is needed to achieve its goals, in order to enhance the welfare of the people at the grassroot level. The various problems facing local government are partly a function of poor performance of their staff. When staff performance level is low, achieving the organizational goals will be a mirage. Okotoni (2000) averred that for local government to make meaningful contributions to national development, competent personnel are indispensable. It is important to note that the success or failure of any organization depends largely on the quantity and

quality of its personnel. One other problem that has the tendency of affecting the performance of staff, but that has not been given much attention in this part of the world, most especially in the local government, is conflict. Conflict is an inevitable reality in every organization and society. Hocker and Wilmot (1985) asserted that conflict is an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scare rewards, and interference from other party in achieving their goals.

A fundamental fact that needs to be stressed at this point is that whatever the outcome of a conflict depend on the perception of the conflictual parties and the conflict management styles adopted in the course of the conflict. Whitfied (1994) stated that conflict can cause a great deal of injury and/or a great deal of good, depending on the management style of an organization. Ussa local government council is located in Taraba State. It enjoys a considerable number of staff strength and its survival and productivity lies on the performance of its staff.

The local government faces a lot of challenges like every other local government in Nigeria. For instance, Adediji, (2000) opined that in Nigeria, local government councils are beclouded with various forms of conflict. According to Henry (2009) these conflicts can have both negative and positive outcomes on the individual employees, and the organization at large. In organizations, when conflict arises, it needs to be resolved by the management for the sake of the

organizational growth, survival and to enhance performance (Henry, 2009). Considering the fact that conflict can hamper staff performance and at the same time leads to increased staff productivity, the outcome of a conflict depends on the conflict management strategy employed by the parties concerned. In this regard, this study examined the relationship between conflict management and staff performance in Ussa local government area of Taraba state.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Various forms of conflict characterized human institutions. The nature of a conflict and the behaviour of parties involved in a conflict are important issues that will determine the resolution outcomes of a conflict. Local government councils in Nigeria are beclouded with various forms of conflicts. These conflicts have the tendency of affecting the performance of their staff, when they are not properly managed. The existing situation in Ussa local government located in Taraba state is not different from others. This local government is not free from the experiences of various forms of conflict, as do like other local governments in the country (Adediji, 2000). The local government is made up of individuals with different kinds of needs, aspirations and goals. Hence, they are bound to engage in conflict. The problem, therefore, is not the occurrence of conflict, but the management styles adopted by parties concerned to produce a positive outcome that will impact positively on them. Staff performance is a function of certain

organizational variables, and conflict happens to be one of the variables inherent in organizations. And if they are poorly managed, staff performance will be negatively affected, which will affect the general behaviour of the local government. But where conflicts are positively managed in the council, staff performance will be improved. Therefore the problem statement is based on the ground that the manner in which conflicts are handled in the council can either determine the effective performance of staff or the poor performance of staff.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine the nature of conflict management and how it affect staff performance in Ussa local government in Tarable State. The specific objectives of the study are:

(i)   To identify the nature of conflict often experienced by staff in the local government service.

(ii)   To identify the causes of conflict in the local government service.

(iii)   To examine the effects of conflict in Ussa local government service.

(iv)   To examine the conflict management strategies often employed by staff in resolving conflict in the service.

(v)   To identify the impact of conflict management strategies on staff performance in the local government service.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions will serve as a guide to the study.

(i)   What is the nature of conflict that staff often encounters in the council?

(ii)   What are the causes of conflict in the local government service?

(iii) What are the effects of conflict in the local government service?

(iv)   What are the conflict management strategies that staff often adopt in resolving conflict in the local government service?

(v)   What is the impact of conflict management strategies on the performance of staff in the council?

1.5 Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will be tested at 0.05 level of significance in the course of the study.

(i)   There is no significant relationship between the choice of conflict management strategies and staff performance in the local government.

(ii)   There is no significant relationship between conflict management strategies and staff performance in the local government.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study will be useful in providing government and its agencies with the necessary information about the dynamics of conflict and conflict management in relations to staff performance in local government councils in the country.

Apart from this, local government staff will equally be educated by this study on the nature of conflict confronting the local government areas, and the need for them to understand that the presence of conflict may not suggest something bad, but the attitude, perception and the styles of managing conflicts are of utmost important in the effective management of conflict to promote growth in the council.

In the same manner, the study will be valuable to government at central and local levels in the sense that, it will make them to understand the nature and causes of conflict and conflict management behaviour that can be adopted to improve the performance of their staff. Also, the general public will benefit from this study. The study will enlighten them on the nature and behaviour of conflict and the measures that can be adopted to intervene in it. Finally, fellow researchers will also find this study as an important reference material when conducting research similar to this topic.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on the examination of the issues of conflict management and staff performance. Therefore, to achieve the specific objectives of the study, Ussa Local government council in Taraba State was used as a case study. Hence, the staff in the organization will be randomly selected for the study. Based on this, the scope of the study does not extend beyond the local government.

1.8 Limitation of the Study

This research work is limited by some factors. The responding patterns of the respondents to the questionnaire administrated within a specified period may be extended to give them enough time to gather the needed data for the study. Apart from this, time is also a major limiting factor in the consideration of a wide number of variables and local councils.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is based on the review of related literature. Therefore, the review is focused on the following explained points.

2.1   Concept of Conflict

Conflict is derived from a Latin word called, "confligere" which means "to strike together". To "strike together" does not really explain the dynamic process that conflict has taken in this contemporary period. Hence, the need to attempt the definition of conflict considering other sources. For instance, Alessandra and Hunsaker (1993) postulated that conflict arises from the clash of perceptions, goals or value in an arena where people care about the outcome. Hocker and Wilmot (1985) indicated that conflict as an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards, and interference from the other party in achieving their goals. Coser (1964) posited that conflict as a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power, and resources in which the aim of the opponents are to neutralize, injure, or eliminate the rivals. Duetsch (1973) stated that conflict exists whenever incompatible activities occur.   These definitions reflect the fact that the issues of incompatibility, relationship, opposition, interference and interdependent are the

basic elements of a conflict situation. And this shows that conflict is the product of interaction between or among parties and conflict can only occur where there are interdependent parties. This, perhaps, informed Barki and JHartwick (2001) to define conflict as a phenomenon that occurs between interdependent parties as they experience negative emotional reactions to perceived disagreements and interference with the attainment of their goals. Rahim (2002) considered conflict as an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities (i.e individual, group, organization, e.t.c).

Conflicts can occur in organizations when: (i) a party is required to engaged in an activity, that is, incongruent with his or her needs or interests; (ii) a party holds behavioural preferences, the satisfaction of which is incompatible with another person's implementation of his or her preferences; (iii) a party wants some mutually desirable resource that is in short supply, such that the wants of everyone may not be satisfied fully; (iv) a party possess attitudes, values, skills and goals that are salient in directing his or her behaviour but are perceived to be exclusive of the attitudes, values, skills, and goals held by the other(s); (v) two parties have partially exclusive behavioural preferences regarding their joint actions; and (vi) two parties are interdependent in the performance of functions or activities (Rahim, 2002). Donohue and Kolt (1992) stated that conflict is a

situation in which interdependent people express (manifest or latent) differences in satisfying their individual needs and interests, and they experience interference from each other in accomplishing these goals. According to Alimba (2005), the definition of Donohue and Kolt (1992) suggests the following facts. First, conflict occurs where people are interdependent: That is, when people are connected in one way or the other, either by views, goals, aspirations etc, the forces binding them together may be pursued differently, which may give rise to the emergence of conflict.

Secondly, conflict can be expressed in manifest or latent form. This means that parties concerned may blow the problem out of proportion, for people to know about it or they may decide to keep it secret. Manifests conflicts can be solved since their identities are known, but latent conflicts are not open to people's awareness, hence, they are difficult to manage.

Thirdly, conflict involves needs and interest. Need are those things that are fundamentally of utmost importance to people, which they must satisfy as soon as the purchasing power is available. Interests on the other hand, are the desires of people in life. These elements, most especially, needs, have the potential of generating conflict, when expressed differently by people in a collective state and conflict is caused by interference: In a bid to achieve the emerging needs and interest, interference is experienced among interested parties, which will bring

about conflict. Conflict, therefore, is a fate of life, which occurs where we have human interaction marked with differences in goals, perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, values or needs (Alimba, 2005).

2.2 Forms of Conflict

There are various forms of conflict that staff can experience in organizations, whether in public or private. Hammed (2000) enumerated the following as types of conflicts: cognitive or affective conflict, inter-personal conflict, intra-group conflict, inter-group conflict, intra-organizational conflict and inter-organizational conflict. Cognitive or affective conflicts are the intellectual discomfort created by incompatible goals (Hammed, 2000). According to Harper (2004) inter-personal conflict is a type of conflict that occurs when two individuals disagree about issues, actions or goals and where joint outcomes become important. Hall (1971) considered intra-group conflict as conflict that occurs among members or people within a group. Owens-Ibie, (2000) posited that inter-group conflict is a form of conflict which occurs or exists between or among groups such as marketing department and technical services. Intergroup conflict can take place in between different departments, most especially, when they are competing for scarce resources. Owens-Ibie (2000) poited out that intra-organizational conflict is type of conflict that occurs when conflict characterizes the overall organizational functioning. Inter-

organizational conflict. Interpersonal conflict, according to Azuonwu (2002) is a type of disagreement that exists between two or more persons in a particular group. Bercovitch (1982) considered intergroup conflict as interdepartmental conflict and he went ahead to say that activities are assigned to departments that often have mutually exclusive structured interests and goals and that interact within the framework of scarce resources and task dependence. In public organizations the forms of conflict that can take place are interpersonal conflict, intrapersonal conflict, intragroup conflict and intergroup conflict.

2.3 Causes and Effects of Conflict

Several factors are responsible for the causes of conflict, whether in public or private organizations. Katz (1964) indicated three causes of conflict in organizations as: structural conflict, role conflict, resource conflict. He stated further that structural conflict arises out of the need to manage the interdependence between different organizational sub-units while role conflict arises from sets of prescribed behaviour and resources conflict stems from interest groups competing for organizational resources (Katz, 1964). Jonkman (2006) identified communication barriers, role ambiguity, unclear expectations or rules, unresolved prior conflicts, conflicting interests, disagreement on task and content issues as some of the factors that causes conflict in organizations. Albert (2000) posited that

conflict can be caused by: competition for inadequate resources; contradicting value systems; psychological needs of groups and individuals; manipulation of information and perception. Gimlet and Carol (1991) identified ten sources of conflict in organizations as:

(i) The level of bureaucratic hierarchy;

(ii) The rules and regulation influencing job structure, and role clarity;

(iii) The degree of departmental specialization.

(iv) The demographic and psychological similarities and differences among the staff and degree of staff stability;

(v) The degree of use of close supervision;

(vi) The degree of employees participation in decision making;

(vii) The type of power used by the manager to achieve goals (e.g. reward and recognition, punishment, personal persuasion);

(viii) The type of reward and recognition in place and their implementation;

(ix) The degree of staff interdependence and

(x) Conflict in the roles and responsibilities managers.

In the same vein, Wiemann (1995) identified five situations that can lead to conflict in organizations as: (i) Incompatible goals: This happens when two or

more parties involved in coordinating activities agree on expected results or goals of such activities.

(ii) Unrealistic expectations: These are usually the features of many organizational yearly projections; these projections introduce fear, tension and an uneasy work climate.

(iii) Differing Rate of Relational Growth: This is a prominent feature of interpersonal and group dynamics. Parties or partners view relationships as being of different levels of growth and this affects their sense of judgement of otherwise normal occurrences.

(iv) Inaccurate perceptions and attributions: Conflict is caused by the way people perceive issues in an organization. Therefore, most conflicting situations are caused by the problem of perceptions.

(v) Cultural differences: This is another condition that easily leads to conflict. Behaviour and attitude are usually a function of cultural orientation, so are biases and prejudices, which are learnt informally in the process of development. Peretomode and Peretomode (2008) stated that the sources of conflict in an organization can be divided into two: non structural determinants and structural sources. The non structural causes are differences in personnel trait/incompatible personalities, background of employees, value system, perceptions, poor communication skills, emotions and differences in attitudes and behaviour and

expectations that are not fulfilled. The structural sources are those that arise from the design and structural features of the organization. They include task interdependence, pooled interdependence, sequential interdependence, and reciprocal interdependence (Peretomode and Peretomode, 2008). These factors are equally responsible for conflict in local government councils.

Adediji (2000) pointed out that political factor, economic factor, socio-cultural factor and natural factor are issues that give rise to conflict at the local government council. He said that politics is the principal factor that causes conflict in the local government and that poverty among many local government functionaries often leads to acts of misappropriation of public funds which is the economic factor that causes conflict in the council. Selfishness, aggressiveness, gestures over money, land and women as some of the natural factors that bring about conflict in the local government (Adediji, 2000).

The effects of conflict can manifest in positive as well as negative outcomes. The negative effects of conflict, as posited by Henry (2009) are that conflict can create so much interpersonal hostility that group members may become unwilling or unable to work with each others in achieving the organizational objectives. Conflicts can also lead to delays in work, disinterest and lack of action and in extreme cases, it might lead to complete breakdown of the group (Parker, 1974). Akanji (2005) enumerated dislocation of the entire

group and polarization; reduced productivity and job performance; psychologically and/or physical injury; emotional distress and inability to sleep; interference with problem activities; escalation of difference into antagonistic position and malice and increased hostility, as the negative manifestations of conflict. Tonsing (2005:11) posited that conflict can help to raise and address problems; energizes work to be on the most appropriate issues; motivates people to participate and helps people to learn how to recognize and benefit from their differences. Henry (2009:17) indicated that the positive effects of conflict are: improving the quality of decisions, stimulating involvement in the discussion and building group cohesion. In local government council, Abdulrahman (2010) discovered that low productivity of staff; slow in decision-making process; and lower staff morale are the major effects of conflict in local government.

2.4 Conflict Management and Staff performance

Wallensteen and Swanstrom (2002) considered conflict management as a change, from destructive to constructive, in the mode of interaction. Rahim (2002) posited that conflict management is designing effective macro-level strategies to minimize the dysfunctions of conflict and enhancing the constructive functions of conflict in order to enhance learning and effectiveness in an organization. Tanner (2000) averred that conflict management is the limitation, mitigation and/or containment of a conflict without necessarily solving it. Best

(2006) defined conflict management as the process of reducing the negative and destructive capacity of conflict through a number of measures and by working with and through the parties involved in that conflict. Conflict management, therefore, is the control, but not resolution of a long-term or deep-rooted conflict (Spangler, 2003). Robbins (1974) listed the following as resolution techniques that can be employed in resolving conflict. The techniques are problem solving, super ordinate goals, avoidance, smoothing, compromise, authoritative command, altering the human variable and altering structural variables.

Of all these strategies, Robbins (1974) believes that problem solving is the most effective. Fleetwood (1987) stated that problem-solving involves coming face-to-face with the conflict's underlying causes. Hammed (2000) considered problem solving as another strategy of handling conflict. It requires the parties to the conflict acting together either by negotiating with each other or assisted by a third party (mediator) to resolve the conflict on an acceptable and agreeable terms to each party.

Ahmad (2005) asserted that conflict management, as a concept, has been conventionally associated with conflict containment. McGarry and O'Leary (1993) divided ethnic regulation into two main sections: conflict management and conflict termination. This distinction is based on the idea that the former is concerned with the handling of the consequences of differences between

adversaries, whereas the latter is concerned with terminating them (McGarry and O'Leary, 1993). Wallensteen (2002) pointed out that conflict management typically focuses on the armed aspects of conflict: bringing the fighting to an end, limiting the spread of the conflict and, thus, containing it. Pitsch and Adekson (2000) identified four types of conflict management, namely: preventive diplomacy, conflict early warning, track 1 diplomacy and track 11 mediation. Utsaha and Ugbah (2007) suggested that the strategies and policies for managing conflicts must, of necessity, be multipronged. Hence, they recommended the practices of: (i) preventive diplomacy (ii) non-coercive or problem-solving approach.

While some of these approaches enumerated can be seen as large scale conflict management mechanisms for addressing community and ethnic conflicts, there are conflict handling styles that can be used to manage interpersonal conflict situations. Connelly (1998:32) argued that such styles are "power-oriented style, in which one uses whatever power seems appropriate to win one's position".

Synthesizing the works of Hall (1969), Blake and Mouton (1970), Kilmann and Thomas (1975), five conflict management styles can be deduced. The styles are avoiding, accommodating, competing, compromising and collaborating. The styles are based on two concerns for individual:

cooperativeness and assertiveness. In cooperativeness, a party attempts to satisfy the other party's concerns, while in assertiveness, the party attempts to satisfy its own concern. Competition: This style emphasizes that a party tries to satisfy its own concern and disregard other's concern. Its shows an unwillingness to satisfy the others concern to even a minimal degree (Hammed, 2000). Avoidance: Conflict avoidance, according to Ojiji (2006) occurs when one party in a potential conflict ignores the conflicting issues or devices the significance of the issue in their life. It is a way of not addressing the conflict, or a tactical way of postponing the conflict for a better time, if at all such a time will come (Ojiji, 2006).

Accommodation style is both unassertive and cooperative. This style stresses that the individual neglects his/her own concerns to satisfy the concern of the other person (Connelly, 1998). Compromising style is both assertive and cooperative. Collaborating style is both assertive and cooperative. The conflicting parties "work with each other to find a solution that is satisfactory to both of them. It is about dialogue in which the parties listen actively and gain understanding of the other party as well as their own. That understanding enables them to develop a solution that satisfies the concerns of both parties" (Ojiji, 2006).

Compromise: According to Ojiji (2006) involves finding an expedient mutually acceptable solution, which party satisfies both parties. In other words, parties split their differences and make concessions in order to solve the conflict. In this situation, a party is partially assertive and partially cooperative (Ojiji, 2006). These conflict management styles have been found to influence the performance of staff. Staff performance is an independent variable and an important variable for organizational survival. According to Ejiogu (1992) the first known explicit theoretical formulation of job performance/ expectancy theory may be attributed to Victor Vroom, who in his book, Work and Motivation, hypothesizes that a person's job performance (P) is a function of the interaction between the force to performance (F) and motivation and ability (A). Borrowing from the realm of mathematics, this can be briefly expressed as:

$P = f(F \times A)$ (Ejiogu, 1992).

However, Porter and Lawler have, in their book "Managerial Attitudes and Performance" propounded a variant form of job performance theory. According to them, performance (P) is the function of a three-way interaction between exerted effort (E), motivation and ability (A) and role perception (R). Simply expressed: $P = f(E \times A \times R)$ (Ejiogu, 1992). Based on this, staff performance has to do with the ability of a worker and the motivational behaviour of an organization. Cummings and Schwab (1973) posited that staff

performance is a major variable which is dependent on other factors such as mobility and motivation. Staff performance depends on variables which can be internally or externally induced. Conflict management is one of such variables which can influence staff performance for good or for bad. Cetin and Hacifazlioglu (2004) reported that whether or not conflict benefits people depends on two factors: first one is, the intensity of the conflict and the other is the way in which conflict is managed. They continued by saying that functional conflict, or constructive conflict, stimulates people towards greater work efforts, cooperation and creativity.

Stoner and Freeman (1989) stated that conflict simply has the potential for improving or impairing organizational performance, depending on how it is managed and Khan, Afzal and Rehman (2009) revealed that conflict inflicts negative effects but has the potential to be a positive force as contributory to the performance. Cetin and Hacifazliglu (2004) equally posited that constructive conflict stimulates people towards greater work efforts, cooperation and creativity.

Callahan, Fleenor and Knudson (1986) argued that constructive conflict can cause individuals and organizations to become more creative and productive by rising to a challenge. Destructive conflict consumes personal and organization resources in hostility, spitefulness and bitterness (Callahan, el ta, 1986). Tosing

(2005) indicated that interpersonal conflict in the workplace can in certain circumstances be a positive factor in improving the individual performance. The implications of these illustrations are that conflict management style adopted can either be constructive to improve workers performance or become destructive in nature and effect workers performance dysfunctionally. Hence, the conflict management employed at a particular time can go a long way to determine staff performance.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guides this study is conflict theory. The theory is discussed from the perspectives of the traditional and interactionist theories of conflict. According to Robbins (1996) the traditional school of thought was the early approach to the study of conflict. This school of thought, according to him, assumed all conflict was bad. Based on this, conflict was viewed negatively, and was understood as being synonymously with terms such as antagonism, opposition, discord, destruction and clash to reinforce its negative connotation. Robbins (1996) stated further that the traditional view was consistent with the attitudes that prevailed about group behaviour in the 1930s and 1940s. In this way, it is believed that the existence of conflict in an organization will lead to poor productivity of staff and performance of the organization. This school of thought, therefore, believes that conflict in all its ramification should not be allowed in organizations. This is because conflict is

perceived as dysfunctional to organizations and the society in general. The school therefore, is of the view that conflict should be avoided at all cost for organizations to perform effectively. The proponents of the interactionist theory accept the fact that conflict is a normal phenomenon in group behaviours. This is because conflict is seen as a natural occurrence in all groups and organizations. The proponents of the theory, according to Hammed (2000) the fact that groups require disharmony as well as association, and that conflicts within them are by no means altogether disruptive factors. That a certain degree of conflict is an essential ingredient for moving organization forward.

Hence, the main thrust of the theory is that leaders should maintain a minimum level of conflict sufficient to keep the group viable, self critical and creative (Hammed, 2000). Therefore, the acceptance of conflict as a natural way of life calls for the adoption of a viable pattern of management. The point is that the ways conflicts are managed will go along way to determine its outcome. Hence, this research work depend more on the interactionist theory based on the ground that conflict is a normal and a natural occurrence in any organization or group. And that its volatility depends on how it is managed by the groups concerned to achieve the desired outcome.

Therefore, to achieve optimum performance in individuals, the pattern of conflict management employed matters a lot in an organization. Local government councils in Nigeria are beclouded with various forms of conflicts, which are either internally motivated or externally attracted, however to attain

effectiveness and efficiency among their staff, depends on how conflict is managed in by conflicting parties. Based on this theory, conflict management style adopted in resolving conflict at a particular time is highly essential in determining the performance of staff in organizations, whether private or public.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The following methods were used in the course of the study. The methods are: research design, study population, research instrument, validity of instrument, reliability of instrument method of data collection and method of data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

The research design used in this research study is a descriptive survey design. Gay (1981) asserted that descriptive survey involves collecting data in order to test hypothesis or to answer research question concerning the current status of subject of study. The reason for employing this method is to enable the researcher to observe the variables under consideration. So that the variables can easily be analyzed and interpreted to produce answers to the research questions and test the hypotheses raised in the study.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of the study is one thousand three hundred and seventeen (1317) staff, which can be classified into management staff, senior staff and junior staff. We have sixteen (16) management staff; four hundred and ninety five (495) senior staff and eight hundred and six (806) junior

staff. Therefore, the population of the study is made up of all the local government councils in the state.

3.3 Sample of the Study

The Ussa Local government council constituted the organization in which the samples were drawn. Therefore, the staff in the organization were randomly selected in the course of the study. Hence, two hundred and fifty (250) staff were used for the study.

3.4 Sampling Technique

Considering the population of the study, random sampling technique was used to select the two hundred and fifty (250) participants for the study. At the end, a total of two hundred samples were used. This is based on the number of questionnaires that were returned by the respondents.

3.5 Method of Data Collection

The researcher personally visited the local government area to distribute the questionnaire to the respondents in order to gather the needed data for analysis. The data collected was through the use of a questionnaire. Hence, study make use of primary data.

3.6 Description of the Instrument for Data Collection

The research Instrument used for data collection for the study is tagged "Conflict Management and Staff Performance Questionnaire" (CMSPQ). The

instrument is a self constructed questionnaire. The instrument is a 25-item on conflict management and staff performance. The questionnaire is divided into three sections, namely: A, B and C. Section A seeks information on the background of the respondents. Section B elicits data on the nature, causes and effects of conflict. Section C asks questions on staff conflict management strategies and staff performance. The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents to determine their responses on it.

3.7   Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection is a questionnaire. A questionnaire method was used to collect the required data. The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents selected for the study for the purpose of data collection. The instrument was distributed to the respondents for a period of three days. The researcher later went back to the local government to personally collect the questionnaire. The collected questionnaires was assembled, collated and analyzed to produce answers to the research questions and hypotheses of the study.

3.8 Validation of the Instrument.

The instrument was validated with the help of the researcher's supervisor and two other scholars in the area of study. Hence, face and content validity will be used for the study.

3.9 Method of Data Presentation and Analysis

The methods of data presentation and analysis was used for the study are percentage, frequency counts, mean, and Pearson Product Correlation Coefficient. The cut-off point for the mean is 3.00. Therefore, any variable that has a weighted mean score of 3.00 or above is considered as agree and is a strong factor, while the reverse is the case for variables that its weighted mean is below 3.00. Hence, such variables are considered as disagree and weak factors in nature. The Pearson Product Correlation Coefficient was used to test the hypotheses developed for the study at 0.05 level of significance. The research questions were analysed and answers provided for them through percentage, frequency counts, and mean

3.10 Instrument of Data Analysis

The instrument of data analysis is both descriptive and inferential in nature. The descriptive statistics that were used to analyze the research questions are percentage, frequency counts, and mean, while the inferential statistics was used to test the hypotheses of the study. Therefore, the inferential statistics used is Pearson Product Correlation Coefficient.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This chapter deals with data analysis, findings of the study and the discussion of findings.

4.1 Data Analysis

The data presented below and the consequent explanations that follow represent data analysis and data interpretations.

Table 4.1 Sex of Respondents

variable	F	%
Male	112	56
Female	88	44
Total	**200**	**100**

  Source: field survey 2011

Table 4.1 indicates the sex of respondents. 56% of the respondents are male, while 44% are female. The implication of this development is that majority of respondents are male.

Table 4.2: Working Experience of Respondents

variable	F	%
0-5 years	10	5
6-10 years	17	9
11- 15 years	82	41
16- 20 years	26	13
21-25years	22	11
26-30years	36	18
31+ years	7	3
Total	**200**	**100**

Source: field survey 2011

Table 4.2 indicates the working experience of respondents. While 5% represents those that have worked for a period of 0-5years, 9% are those that have worked for 6-10years. 41% of the respondents indicated that they have worked for a period of 11-15 years. 11% are those who have worked for 21-25years, 18% have worked for 26-30 years and 3% for 31+years. Those who have worked for 11-15 years constituted the majority in the sample.

Table 4.3: Educational Qualification of Respondents

variable	F	%
OND/ NCE	90	45
HND	46	23
B.Ed/B.A/B.Sc	16	8
M.Ed/ M.A / M.Sc	-	-
Others	48	24
Total	**200**	**100**

Source: field survey 2011

Table 4.3 reveals the educational qualifications of respondents. 45% of the respondents are holders of OND/NCE, while 23% are holders of HND. B.Ed/ B.A/ B.Sc holders are 8%, while others with various certificates such as primary and secondary school certificates and professional qualifications, constituted 24%. None of the respondents have M.Ed/ M.A / M.Sc. Hence, Majority of the respondents are holders of OND/NCE.

Table 4.4: Age of Respondents

variable	F	%
20-30 years	57	29
31-40 years	86	43
41- 50 years	37	18
51- 60 years	12	6

61+ years	8	4
Total	**200**	**100**

Source: field survey 2011

Table 4.4 shows the age of respondents. 29% of them are within the age bracket of 20-31years. 43% are those within the age bracket of 31-40years. 18% are within the age of 20-25years, while 6% and 4% are within the ages of 51- 60 years and 61+ years respectively. The majority of the respondents fall within the age bracket of 31-40years.

Table 4.5: Marital Status of Respondents

variable	F	%
Single	53	26
Married	119	60
Divorced	23	12
Widower	5	2
Total	**200**	**100**

Source: field survey 2011

Table 4.5 reveals the marital status of respondents. 26% of the respondents are single, while 60% are married and 12% are divorced. 2% of the

respondents are widower. The married ones constituted the majority of the respondents.

Table 4.6: Staff Status of Respondents

variable	F	%
Management Staff	10	5
Senior Staff	53	27
Junior Staff	135	68
Total	**200**	**100**

Source: field survey 2011

Table 4.6 shows the staff status of respondents. 5% of the respondents are management staff, while 27% are senior staff, and 68% are junior staff. The junior staff constituted the majority of the respondents.

Research Question 1

Nature of conflict that staff often encounters in the council.

Table 4.7: Nature of Conflict among Staff

variable	F	%
Conflict with Management Staff.	109	55
Conflict with Senior Staff	42	21
Conflict with Junior Staff	49	24
Total	**200**	**100**

Source: field survey 2011

Table 4.7 shows the nature of conflict that staff often encounter in the local government council. 55% of the respondents indicated that they often experience conflict with the management staff. 21% revealed that they usually encounter conflict with the senior staff. 24% indicated that they often encounter conflict with the junior staff. Therefore, management staff conflict is the major conflict that is confronting the council.

Research Question 2

The causes of conflict in the local government.

Table 4.8: Causes of Conflict in the council

variable	F	%
Problem of staff promotion	121	61
Shortage of working facilities for staff	93	47
Communication breakdown	20	10
Deductions from staff salary	103	52
Problem of screening	108	54
Lateness to office	14	7

Source: field survey 2011

Table 4.8 shows the causes of conflict in the local government. 61% of the respondents indicated that the problem of staff promotion leads to conflict in the council. 47% identifies shortage of working facilities for staff as conflict causative factor in the organization. 10% indicated communication breakdown, 52% indicated the deductions from staff salary, 54% stated the problem of screening and 7% lateness to the office as factors that lead to conflict in the local government council.

Research Question 3

The effects of conflict in the Council.

Table 4.9: Effects of Conflict in the councils

variable	F	%
Lower staff performance	168	84
Leads to hatred and tribalism	67	34
Leads to fighting	99	49
Lower staff morale	139	69
Polarizes staff	101	51
Hinders smooth working relationship of staff	52	26
Hampers effective decision-making process in the council	43	22

Source: field survey 2011

Table 4.9 reveals the effects of conflict in the council. Eighty four percent (84%) of the respondents indicated that conflict lowers staff performance. 34% stated that conflict leads to hatred and tribalism. 49% of the respondents indicated that conflict leads to fighting in the council. 69% stated that conflict lowers staff morale, while 51% indicated that it polarizes staff. 26% and 22% stated that conflict hinders the smooth working relationship of staff and hampers effective decision-making process in the council respectively.

Research Question 4

The conflict management strategies *that staff often adopt in resolving conflict in the local government council.*

Table 4.10 Conflict Management Strategies of Staff

variable	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	R
competition	200	3.30	0.84	A
Accommodation	200	2.07	1.03	D
Collaboration	200	3.40	0.63	A
Avoidance	200	2.13	1.04	D
Compromise	200	2.78	1.06	D

Source: field survey 2011   **D= Disagree and A= Agree**

Table 4.10 shows the conflict management styles often adopted by staff in resolving conflict in the council. The respondents agree that competition is often being employed by staff in resolving conflict in the council($\overline{X} = 3.30$). The respondents disagree with the use of accommodation ($\overline{X} = 2.07$); avoidance ($\overline{X} = 2.13$) and compromise ($\overline{X} = 2.78$) conflict management styles in resolving conflict in the council. The respondents agree to the use of collaboration ($\overline{X} = 3.40$) conflict management style. Based on this, the

respondents are favourably disposed to the use of competition and collaboration styles in resolving conflict in the council.

Research Question 5

The impact of conflict management strategies on the performance of staff in the council.

Table 4.11 Impact of Conflict Management Strategies on staff performance.

variable	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	R
Conflict resolution strategies increase job commitment.	200	3.26	0.71	A
Conflict handling styles positively influence staff performance.	200	3.23	0.66	A
Staff motivation rises as a result of conflict resolution behaviour of the management.	200	3.10	0.51	A
Staff performance has no bearing on conflict handling behaviour of management	200	2.24	1.73	D

Source: field survey 2011   **D= disagree and** A= Agree

Table 4.11 indicates the impacts of conflict management strategies on the performance of staff. The respondents agree that Conflict resolution strategies increase job commitment ($\overline{X}$ = 3.26); Conflict handling styles positively influence staff performance ($\overline{X}$ = 3.23); and Staff motivation rise as a result of conflict resolution behaviour of the management ($\overline{X}$ =3.10). The respondents

disagree with the fact that staff performance has no bearing on conflict handling behaviour of management ($\overline{X}$ = 2.24). This means that staff performance is greatly influenced by the conflict handling style adopted by workers in the council.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between the choice of conflict management style and staff performance in the local government.

Table 4.12:   choice of conflict management strategies and staff performance

Variable	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	R	P	Remark
Choice of Conflict management style	200	14.05	5.68			
Staff performance	200	9.10	4.72	0.61	0.001	Sig.

Table 4.12 reveals that there is a significant relationship between the choice of conflict management strategies and staff performance in the council (r= 0.61; P< 0.05). This shows that the choice of conflict management strategies influence the level of staff performance in the local government council.

Research Hypothesis 2

There is no relationship between conflict management strategies and staff performance *in the local government.*

Table 4.13: Conflict management strategies and staff performance

Variable	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	R	P	Remark
Conflict Management Styles	200	8.92	7.22			
Staff performance	200	4.10	6.01	0.76	0.001	Sig.

Table 4.13 indicates that there is a significant relationship between the conflict management strategies and staff performance (r= 0.76; P< 0.05). This shows that the type of conflict management strategies used by staff will influence the performance of staff in the local council.

4.2 Findings of the study

This study examined the conflict management strategies and staff performance in Ussa local government council. The study therefore, discovered that:

(i) conflict with management staff is the major type of conflict that usually occurs in the council.

(ii)   the problem of staff promotion; shortage of working facilities for staff; deduction from staff salary and the problem of screening are the main factors that causes conflict in the council.

(iii)   low staff performance; low staff morale; polarizes staff; and leads to fighting are the major effects of conflict in the council.

(iv)   the major conflict management strategies often used by staff in the council are competition and collaboration.

(v)   conflict resolution strategies increase job commitment; conflict handling styles positively influence staff performance and staff motivation rises as a result of conflict resolution behaviour of the management.

(vi)   there is a significant relationship between the choice of conflict management style and staff performance in the council (r= 0.61; P< 0.05). This shows that the choice of conflict management style influence the level of staff performance in the local government council.

(vii)   there is a significant relationship between the conflict management style adopted by the management and staff performance(r= 0.76; P< 0.05). This shows that the type of conflict management style

used by the management will influence the performance of staff in the local council.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

This study examined the issue of conflict management and staff performance in a local government council. The study, therefore, discovered that conflict with management staff is the major type of conflict that usually occurs in the council. The study also discovered that the causes of conflict are: problem of staff promotion; shortage of working facilities for staff; deduction from staff salary and the problem of screening. The works of Albert (2001) and Gumuseli and Hacifazlioglu (2009) are in support of the findings of the study.

Albert (2001) found out that competition for inadequate resources is a major factor that causes organizational conflict. Gumuseli and Hacifazlioglu (2009) discovered that unclear and different goals, differences in status, role and authority ambiguity, limited resources, frequency of evaluation are some of the basic causes of conflict in organizations. This is in consonance with findings of this study, which are inadequacy of material resources and evaluation problem (i.e screening problem) attract conflict in the organization. The effects of conflict in the council are: low staff performance; low staff morale; Polarizes staff; and leads to fighting. Tonsing

(2005) found out that the effects of conflict are low productivity of staff, slow down decision-making process, and lower staff morale. Akanji (2005) indicated that the effects of conflict are: dislocation of the entire group and polarization; reduced productivity and job performance; psychological and/or physical injury; emotional distress and inability to sleep; interference with problem activities; escalation of difference into antagonistic position and malice and increased hostility. These findings tally with the discovering of this study. The major conflict management strategies often used by staff in the council are competition and collaboration. Green, Brewer, Mitchell and Weber (2002) stated that upper organizational status individuals were higher on the use of collaborating style with the lower status individuals.

Lee (1990) discovered that organizational subjects adopt a style of competition in the resolution of differences with subordinates. Rahim (1992) showed that collaborating style is the most desirable style for managing conflict. This is a pointer to the effect that competition and collaboration are favoured by individual members of an organization. Hence, these findings are in consonance with the findings of the study. The study equally discovered that conflict resolution strategies increase job commitment; positively influence staff performance and staff motivation rises as a result of conflict resolution behaviour of the management. These findings are in

agreement with the postulations of Tonsing (2005). Tonsing (2005) posited that conflict styles can help to raise and address problems; energizes work to be on the most appropriate issues; motivates people to participate and helps people to learn how to recognize and benefit from their differences. The study also discovered that there is a significant relationship between the choice of conflict management strategies and staff performance (r= 0.61; P< 0.05). This shows that the choice of conflict management strategies influence the level of staff performance in the local government council. This finding is in agreement with the works of Hendel, Fish, and Galon (2005). They asserted that leadership style and choice of conflict management strategies may strongly influence the outcomes of a conflict.

The implication of this assertion is that the choice of conflict management strategies impact considerably on the end result of a conflict situation. The study found out that there is a significant relationship between the conflict management strategies adopted by the management and staff performance(r= 0.76; P< 0.05). This shows that the type of conflict management strategies used by the management impact positively on the performance of staff in the local council. The assertion of Whitfied (1994) supports the discovery of this study. Whitfied (1994) pointed out that conflict can cause a great deal of good, depending on the management style

of an organization. Hence, conflict management strategies employed can enhance the performance of people in an organization.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This study examined conflict management and staff performance in Ussa Local Government. Therefore to achieve the specific objectives of the study, the study was divided into five chapters. Chapter one dealt with the background of the study, the statement problem of the study, the objectives of the study, the significance and scope of the study. Chapter two dealt with the review of related works that have bearing on the areas of focus of the study. Chapter three dealt with the methods and procedures used in the collection and administration of questionnaire to collect the needed data for analysis to produce answers to the research questions raised and to test the hypotheses developed to guide the study. Chapter four examined the analysis of data, its explanation and obtaining of data. In this chapter, focus was based on the determination of data and its consequent discussion. Therefore, the data of the study was clearly stated and justified with the discovering of other studies related to the study. The issues of summary, conclusion and recommendations were highlighted in chapter five.

5.2 Conclusions

The local government plays important roles in the development of grass-root people. It is the government at the local level. The relevance of governance is made available to people in remote areas by the activities of the local government. Since local government remains the closest government to the people, it becomes necessary to note that its impact should be felt more by the people that any other levels of government in the country. Based on this, the performance levels of local government councils depend on how they can judiciously empower their staff to achieve set objectives. Apart from this, how emerging conflict in local councils can be managed to prevent conflicts from escalating into violence act that can disintegrate their activities and consequently their goals.

Conflict is a serious issue that must be given the deserved level of attention in local government levels in Nigeria. Conflict is an issue in every local government in Nigeria. This is because conflict is a constant phenomenon in any human organization. Therefore, managing conflict in such a way that it will become a constructive activity that will promote growth and development in local government councils is the area of priority of this study. Conflict management patterns often employed by members in resolving conflict in the councils were equally determined. The point is that

the goals of local governments cannot be achieved in a state or atmosphere of instability, hence, the ways conflicts emerging from local councils are perceived and handled have implications for the survival of the system and its operational mechanisms. Therefore, constructive management of conflicts in the local government councils will positively impact on the growth and development of local activities, which will consequently improve the lives of people at the grass-root levels.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings and the subsequent conclusion, therefore, it is necessary to make the following recommendations for the growth and development of the Council and other organizations peculiar to the one under consideration.

(i)   The management staff should endeavour to acquire conflict management skills, so that emerging conflicts can be positively resolved to improve the development of the organization.

(ii)   The management staff of the council should provide staff with the needed working facilities to improve their working activities for the productivity of the organization.

(iii)   Staff salaries and incentives should be paid promptly and regularly, so that they can be motivated to discharge their duties effectively and efficiently.

(iv) Early warning facilities should be built into the system for conflict to be arrested early enough before it degenerates into fighting and violent act in the council.

(v) Conflict management training should be mounted for staff to motivate them to learn how to respond to conflicts, so that it can results in positive outcomes for the development of the organization.

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CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND STAFF PERFORMANCE QUESTIONNAIRE (CMSPQ)

Department of Management Technology

Federal University of Technology, Yola

10th November, 2010.

Dear Respondent,

I am a postgraduate student in the Department of Management Technology, Federal University of Technology, Yola. I am conducting a research on Conflict management and Staff Performance. Therefore your favourable responses to the under listed questions will enable the researcher to gather the require information for the study. Your responses shall be treated with strict confidence and thanks for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Enoch, D.M.

SECTION A (Background information of respondents)

(Please, mark x where applicable)

(1) Sex of respondent

 Male (   )   Female   (   )

(2) Working experience of respondents

a) 0-5 years (   ) b) 6-10 years (   ) c) 11-15years (   ) d) 16-20 years (   )

e) 21-25years (   ) f) 26-30 years ( ) g) 31 years & above (   )

(3) Educational qualification of respondent

a) OND/NCE (   ) b) HND (   ) c) B.Ed/B.Sc (   ) d) M.Ed/M.Sc

e) others (please specify)……………………………..

(4) Age of respondents

a) 20-25 years (   ) b) 26-30 years (   ) c)31-35years (   ) d) 36-40 years ( )

e) 41-45years (   ) f) 46-50 years ( ) g) 51years& above (   )

(5) Marital status of respondent

a) Single (   ) b) Married (   ) c) Divorced (   ) d) widower (   )

(6) Staff Status of respondent

a) Management Staff (   ) b) Senior Staff (   ) c) Junior Staff (   )

Section B (Nature, Causes and Effects of Conflict in the Council) Please state or mark (x) whichever is applicable to you.

(7) Indicate the nature of conflict that you often encounter in the council.

 (a) conflict with Management staff (   )   (b)) conflict with senior staff ( )

(c)) conflict junior staff (   )

(8) Indicate those factors that normally cause conflict in the council.

   a…………………………………………………………………………

   b…………………………………………………………………………

   c…………………………………………………………………………

   d…………………………………………………………………………

   e…………………………………………………………………………

   f…………………………………………………………………………

(9) Indicate the effects of conflicts you often experience in the council.

   a…………………………………………………………………………

   b…………………………………………………………………………

   c…………………………………………………………………………

d…………………………………………………………………………………

e…………………………………………………………………………………

f…………………………………………………………………………………

SECTION C: (Staff Conflict Management Styles, and Conflict Management and Staff Performance)

S/No	Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
(10)	I argue my case with my staff to show the merits of my position.					
(11)	I often allow my subordinate to have their ways when disagreement occurs.					
(12)	I try to investigate an issue with my staff to find a solution acceptable to us					
(13)	I try to avoid or ignore any conflict with my staff.					
(14)	I use give – and –take so that a compromise can be reached.					

Conflict Management and Staff performance

S/No	Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
(15)	I am committed to my job because of the conflict resolution style of my head of department					
(16)	The conflict handling capacity of my leaders positively influences my productivity.					
(17)	The ways conflicts concerning staff are resolved have effect on their productivity in my school.					
(18)	Staff are motivated to do their jobs as a result of the conflict resolution behaviour of their heads of department.					
(19)	Staff performance has nothing to do with the conflict handling capacity of their heads of department.					
(20)	The nature of the conflict resolution styles often employed by my head of department is influence by the sex of the conflicting parties					
Choice of Conflict Management Strategies						
(21)	My head of department often					

	give preference to female staff when conflict occurs in the organization.				
(22)	My head of department often give preference to male when resolving conflict in the school				
(23)	The conflict resolution styles of my head of department are based on the level of his/her experience.				
(24)	The way my head of department treat people during conflict normally show that he/she is an experience administrator.				
(25)	The exposure and length of experience of my head of department is a major factor that influence his/her decision during conflict period.				