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A Qualitative Analysis Of Conflict Management Style And Employees' Performance Of Organizations In Northern Region Of Ghana

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Abstract

The outcome of industrialisation and globalisation has lead organizations to be confronted with structural, staffing role, and resource allocation. This has resulted into various form of conflict and lead to significant changes in ways organization manage conflicts. In Ghana, one of the giant member states in West Africa is fast becoming industrialized and having challenges associated with the resulting complexity in both public and private sectors of the economy. The study thematically examined conflict management style and employee performance in selected organizations of northern region of Ghana. The study adopted phenomenology approach to understand the essence and underlying structure of conflict management styles through qualitative explorations of fifteen staff across the assemblies in the region. It is also established that the avoidance style mostly leads to avoidant decisions in organizations and also the avoidance style leads to avoidance of radical innovation which also bad for organizations and therefore the avoidance style is not not good for decision making and innovation in organizations. The study therefore recommended that employee should, imbibe the spirit of sacrifice and selflessness as a means of ensuring that conflicts are nipped at the bud before escalating.

Key words: *Conflict, Conflict management, Decision Making, Employee Performance, Innovation and Organisational policies,*

Introduction

Conflict is an inevitable and prevalent phenomenon that exits in every social setting. Individuals, groups, organisations and even nations relate with each other in the cause of business, social, and economic transactions. Such relationships may become incompatible or consistent when attitudes, skills, values and beliefs differ among people. A process of interaction among the individuals over claims to resource, ideas, power, beliefs and desires also often lead to conflict within and outside the organization. As a result of these conflicts, organisation resources are wasted as employs engage in various forms conflict. The degree to which conflict affects and organisation positively or negatively depends on the nature and the way such conflict is managed (Abdulraheem, 2017). Over this years, human resource managers have developed various styles to handle disagreements and work harmoniously. In the last century, the study of social conflicts led human relation movement, to emphasize the need for cooperation among the workforce to enhance organisational performance. Here, conflict was seen as evil and should be eliminated from the organisation. In any case, a realistic view of conflict is that it has productive as well as destructive potentials.

In the last few decades, the outcome of industrialisation and globalisation has lead organizations to be confronted with structural, staffing role, and resource allocation which has resulted into various form of conflict (Caputo, Ayoko, & Amoo, 2018).This has lead to significant changes in ways organization manage conflicts. In Ghana, one of the giants member states in West Africa is fast becoming industrialized and having challenges associated with the resulting complexity in both public and private sectors of the economy. This complexities result to conflicts within the organizations. Muogbo (2013) note that a dynamic and human process which occur within an individual, between two people or system, groups and management. Individual conflict are to some degree the function of the situation at hand. Nonetheless, it is necessary to modify the situation thereby contributing to reduction of conflicts.

Similarly, although dominating conflict management mechanisms have also been used in managing some conflicts, they have not been successful in all the cases. While dominating styles were successfully applied in the advance and multinational organisations the success of the style of conflict management in the Northern Region is still debatable (Caputo, 2018), In the same region, however, both western-centred and indigenous mechanisms have been used together to successfully manage some conflicts. However, using the same approach has not been successful in the chieftaincy succession conflicts in Dagbon and Bimbilla, and the land conflicts in Nakpanduri and Bunkpurugu. These examples evoke probing questions as to why each of the mechanisms as well as a combination of them worked in some conflicts but not in others. These questions become sharper when viewed against the fact that there has been no focused research on this area of study in the Northern Region. Studies on the conflict situation in the region, such as Ayub and Jehn (2014); Agarwal and Adjirackor (2016) have mainly focused on the conflict actors, causes of conflicts, their effects on livelihood and providing solutions to mitigate the conflicts in the areas where they occur. To date, few empirical studies exist on the holistic diagnosis of the relapse and protracted conflict situation taking into account the origin, the type of mechanisms employed, the nature of actors, and the time and duration of the management processes. The inability to recognize these important factors in works looking at conflicts in the Northern Region has created a gap that has resulted in the many protracted conflicts that have bedecked the place. This study, therefore, set out to fill this gap by conducting an analysis of the relapsed and protracted conflict situations in selected districts in the Northern Region of Ghana. This took into account the origin/history, level, and nature of conflicts as well as the type of mechanism employed by whom and at what time in order to manage conflicts in the Northern Region in a more comprehensive way, contextually, and on a sustainable basis. Hence, the study thematically examined conflict management styles and performance of employees in Northern assembly of Ghana.

Literature Review

Conflict is a multidimensional concept and has been variously defined by different authors. Ogundele (2014) puts it that the concept of conflict in the behavioural sciences has no universally accepted definition.Rather, what exits is a superfluity in conception. Although, the majority of the scholars agreed that conflict is an inevitable process of social life that arises as a result of collision of values, opinions, interests and perceptions among people. According to Abdulraheem (2017) conflict is defined as clash of values and interests, the tension between what individuals or groups feel. Loughry and Amason (2014) also view conflict as a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate the rivals.

Sources of Conflicts in Organisation

According to Leon-Perez, Medina, Arenas and Munduate (2015); Jungst and Blumberg (2016) and Jehn (1997) conflicts are categorized into three: task, relationship and process conflicts.

Task conflict involves differences of opinion about the goals or content of the work and is usually based on facts, data or evidence or the interpretation and application thereof (Leon-Perez, Medina, Arenas & Munduate, 2015). Task conflict arises when individuals hold different opinions about the work to be done where as process conflicts are disagreements about logistical and delegation issues such as who is responsible for what and how tasks should be delegated (Jungst & Blumberg, 2016). Process conflict relates to disagreement about general work procedures such as resource allocations and delegation of responsibilities. A very small amount of task and process conflict might be good for performance, but any more could be detrimental (Loughry & Amason, 2014). Sometimes one of the parties may not be aware of the existence of conflict. This is because conflict involves incompatibilities and disputes, but different people might perceive such incompatibilities and disputes differently. In other words, what seems like a conflict to one person may not seem like a conflict to another (Loughry & Amason 2014). Conflict asymetry is more common in task and process conflicts than relationship conflicts because relationship conflict (RC) is an emotional conflict and refers to interpersonal or socioemotional disagreements or disputes (Shaukat et al, 2017) and is easier to notice by both parties.

Relationship conflict arises from interpersonal relationships. It is what some scholars called personality conflict and it reflects resentment, animosity or general dislike, stemming from differences in values, interest or personal style (Loughry & Amason, 2014). Thus relationship conflict ensues when actors in an organization exhibit opposing behaviours and actions that is based on their personal relationship. Some scholars of conflict studies refer to this type of conflict as personality or affective conflict, Relationship conflict is characterized by envy, resentment, animosity, hatred, selfishness, greed and rancor, emanating from differences in values, interest and individual behavior (Shaukat et al, 2017). Task conflict is more difficult to identify than relationship conflict, because by definition, conflict is about incompatibilities and disputes and different people can see and understand such incompatibilities and disputes differently. In other words, what seems like a conflict to one person may not seem like a conflict to another.

Conflict Management Styles

A conflict management style is an individual's approach in dealing with conflict. This study applies two types of conflict management styles to study performance of employees in organizations: avoidance and dominating styles. The choice is informed by the fact that both dimensions have low cooperative approaches unlike accommodating and collaboration with high cooperation.

Avoidance Style

The avoidance style is applied when an individual withdraws from an issue or gives up personal goals and relationships involving conflict (Silas, Adim, & Ihunda, 2018). Managers might choose to be lenient with employees who have protection probably because they have relationship with more senior officers to their supervisors. Such workers often misbehave towards their supervisors as the managers try to avoid conflicts with them. In addition, Saragih and Hariso (2015) opined that workers who engage in conflict with a superior are most likely to respond in avoidance or obliging behaviour. Short-term avoidance is considered effective in dealing with a conflict when both parties need time to reflect rationally on the issues causing the conflict (Saragih & Hariso, 2015). According to Jehn, Frank, De Wit, Rink, and Rink (2015), people who use this style of conflict management are considered ill-equipped to deal with a conflict that needs attention and because of the low concern they have for themselves and others, they are unlikely to be able to understand and address other people's problems. It will also be difficult for them and the other party to the conflict to find solutions to the conflict as they will lack the basic information that is needed.

Dominating Style

Managers who use the dominating conflict management style have a high concern for themselves and a low concern for others, leading to a win-lose target. This is said to occur when an managers considers his or her own interests to the detriment of workers (Jehn et al., 2015). This style displays competing behaviours and is said to be associated with aggression (Saragih & Hariso, 2015). The dominating style and is appropriate when a quick decision is needed, the other party's decision could be costly, the issue is trivial but important or when it is necessary to overcome an assertive subordinate (Joshua, Dickson, Akwasi, & Akua, 2017; Yoshida, Sendjaya, Hirst, & Cooper, 2014).

Theoretical Review

Theory of Orders

In her essay "The Giving of Orders" published in 1926, Mary Parker Follett discusses the giving of orders and its impacts on employees. Follett opines that if an order is given and it is demanded with unquestionable obedience, it is not a positive management practice (Bouckenooghe, De Clercq, & Deprez, 2014). The discussion also points out that by ordering someone to do something, a task will not necessarily be performed satisfactorily, because people have beliefs and desires that influence their decision to act in a particular way which might be desirable or undesirable to the giver of orders.

According to Follett, three things are required for orders to be obeyed. These are desired attitudes, presenting new ways in which these desired attitudes can be expressed, and expanding the released response when it is being carried out. John and Jeff (2012) added that depending on who gives the order the outcome may not be the same. When an employee feels that he/she has been disrespected he/she may not obey the order and conflict will arise.

Empirical Review

Ayub, AlQurashi, Al-Yafi and Jehn (2017) explored the role of personality traits in determining conflict and performance. The study also moderated mediated relationship between personality and performance through conflict and conflict management styles.Personality differences may be a major reason of conflict, as well as the perception of conflict and preference for handling that conflict. A field survey was conducted with a sample of 153 employees to test the hypotheses. As hypothesized, agreeable persons perceive less conflict and extraverts are more likely to use integrating, obliging, compromising and avoiding styles. Emotionally stable people opt for integrating style whereas neurotics opt for dominating style. Conscientiousness, openness and

emotional stability have a direct effect on performance, but the interactions between conflict and conflict management styles determine the relationship between personality traits and performance.
Gonçalves, Reis, Sousa, Santos, Orgambídez-Ramos, and Scott (2016), examined the extent to which variables such as cultural intelligence and self-monitoring can positively influence the ability to solve interpersonal conflicts more effectively. A sample of 399 individuals, aimed to test a model that explored how cultural intelligence and self-monitoring were related as predictor variables in the styles of conflict resolution. It was observed that cultural intelligence presents itself as a reasonable predictor of conflict management styles, whereas self-monitoring appeared as a dispositional and controversial measure in relation to those styles. Self-monitoring exhibited itself as an important predictor of conflict management, but on the other hand, it had an influence on the choice of the dominating style in conflict situations.
Reynalda, Alexander and Arnulfo (2019) conducted a study that was anchored on the assessment of the most commonly encountered sources of conflict on board the ship and the conflict management styles among Filipino seafarers. Researchers conducted a survey among Filipino seafarers of different groups – the top management, operations officers and the rank and file by the use of descriptive method of research utilizing the triangulation approach. Researchers used the standardized and widely used Thomas Kilmann conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) to determine and understand the conflict management approaches of maritime professionals while at work on board the ship,. This focuses on the five conflict management styles namely Collaborating, Competing, Compromising, Accommodating, and Avoiding. Results revealed that the most dominant among the conflict management styles of the groups of respondents is collaborating and the least practiced is the compromising. However, the most effective management style depends on the conflict situation. When the conflict is properly managed, conflict maybe a source of novel, creative and innovative ideas which can be potential to promote positive change. Results form basis of the improvement of the Conflict Management Program for Seafarers.

Caputo, Ayoko, and Amoo (2018) examined the moderating effect of cultural intelligence (CQ) in the relationship between individual cultural orientations and the choice of a conflict management style. A sample of 403 employees completed self-report measures of all study variables. Findings confirmed the impact of cultural orientations on conflict management styles, namely avoiding, forcing and problem-solving. Moreover, findings confirm the existence of a moderated effect of some facets of cultural intelligence on the relationship between individual's cultural orientations and conflict management styles. The study offers novel empirical evidence for the important role that cultural intelligence has in managing conflict for increased productivity and performance in diverse international environments.

Also, studying team work and workers' performance in selected organizations in the Ashanti Region of Ghana, Akuoko, Peter and Francis (2012) reported that, 62% of the respondents indicated that their involvement in decision making enabled them to be committed to organizational goals and 68.6% specified that employee involvement in decision making created harmonious atmosphere and good feelings among the employees while 52.4% of the respondents indicated that performance of work was high when employees were involved in decision making and 39% of the respondents stated that their involvement in decision making was very low and individual employees who were not frequently involved in decision making were also not performing well on their jobs. In addition,, in a study of Investigating Into the effect of employee involvement practice on decision making process: a case study of Kumasi anglican senior high school in Ghana, Garg (2017). found that employee involvement in decision making resulted in less organizational dispute and reduced and labour unrest and turnover and increased performance.

Methodology

The study adopted phenomenology approach to understand the essence and underlying structure of conflict management styles through qualitative explorations. Through an iterative process of data collection and theory analysis, the study identifies the patterns, relevant elements and essential issues relating to conflict management in the selected study area in Ghana. The study area is the Northern Region municipal assemblies of Ghana. The Northern Region is the biggest among three Regions in Northern Ghana and almost all national. The Northern Region is divided into 14 districts which comprises of Gushegu, Karaga, Kpandai, Kumbumgu, Mion, Nanton, Nanumba North, Nanumba South, Sagnarigu, Savelugu, Tamale Metropoitan, Tatale Sangule and Zabzugu. Tamale is the administrative headquaters of the Northern region of Ghana. A district is a type of administrative division that, in some countries, is managed by local government.

The population of study comprised of one thousand and forty eight staff of the selected assemblies in the Northern region of Ghana based on reports from Ghana 2019 staff audit reports conducted by the presidency. The analysis of the population is presented in table1

Table 1 Analysis of the Population

S/N	ASSEMBLY	NUMBER OF STAFF
1	Tamale Metropoitan Assembly	421
2	Savelugu Municipal Assembly	204
3	Sagnarigu Municipal Assembly	203
4	Yendi Municipal Assembly	150
5	Zabzugu Municipal Assembly	70
	Total	1,048

Source: Ghana Statistical Services 2019

The interview was adopted as a major instrument for data collection for the evaluation of behavioural variables which involves attitudes and feelings where quantitative instruments may not be as in-depth and detailed. In addition, the interview guide assisted in getting vital information in which questionnaire may not able to give the required information. Consequently, three staff were interview from each of the assemblies, suming up to fifteen interviews that were conducted for the study.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Qualitative Analysis

The study was carried out using semi-structure interview to provide information to answer four research question qualitatively which addressed the issues relating to conflict management strategies and employee performance of the selected firm in Ghana. This qualitative aspect of the study gathered information from four participants with semi-structured interview. The participants were purposively selected in order to provide the relevant information needed for this study. This choice is based on the assumption that when one wants to discover, understand, or gain insight, one needs to select a sample from which one can lead the most". The selected participants are directors and experts in the area of firm's administrator of the selected

firms and the participants cut across all zones of the Northern region of the country. Pseudonyms were used to refer to the participants.

The researcher organized the findings of this qualitative study into themes and sub-themes based on the information gathered from the participants. In the analysis, two themes and four sub-themes emerged on the issues conflict management strategies of selected firms in Ghana while, two themes and four sub-themes emerged through the participants' responses on ways to enhance employee's performance. The sub-themes which are the information provided by the respondents were collapsed into themes using theoretical and inductive analysis techniques of thematic analysis respectively. Table 19 below shows the response rate of the participants during the interview.

Table 2: Response Rate of the Participants

Name	Sources	References
Theme 1: – Conflict Mgt. Styles	0	0
Sub-Theme 1: - Avoidance	2	4
- Dominating	3	10
Theme 2: - Employee Performance	0	0
Sub-Theme 2: - Decision Making	5	14
- Innovation	5	15

Source: Authors' Computation (2020)

In order to identify issues conflict management strategies of selected firms in Ghana, two phases were employed by the researcher during the data analysis. The first phase was preparing the data and working on assigning the data units to predetermined themes derived from the quantitative study. In the second stage, the researcher worked with the data units and patterns that did not seem to fit the predetermined themes. In other words, the data unit that fit into innovations and decision making issues were identified and in the second stage, two themes emerged as other issues affecting employee performance. These two issues are dominating and avoidance factors.

Qualitative Data on Conflict Management Styles (CMS)

Dominating and Avoidance Conflict Managememt Stylesmay affect the performance (decision making and innovation) of employees either positively or negatively. This was confirmed by the results of the interviews on the general effects of those two styles: Figure 1 shows the dimension of conflict management styles studied in the selected firms

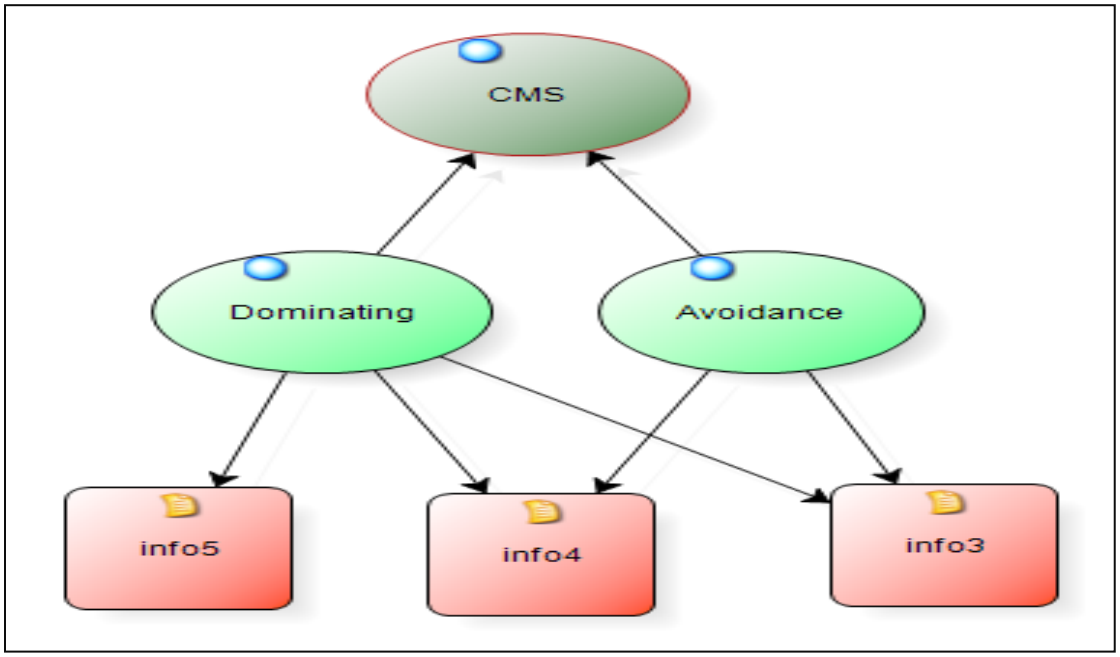


Figure 1: Dimension of conflict management styles in the selected Organisations.

Source: Nvivo Output

Dominating Style

The particiants respondended to general questions on the effects of dominating and avoidance conflict management styles in organization before specific questions were asked on their effects on decision making and innovation.

According to Informant 5:

There is a paradox in dominating and avoiding conflict: when you dominate you create a problem and when you avoid a problem is created. So you have to take a middle course. The dominating style gives quick results but that is not sustainable. Dominating style hinders work flow and delay solution to problems. Work comes to a halt in the absence of the domineering manager. The dominating style is however, better than the avoidance style. Amanager who uses avoidance style in management should better confess his inability to manage and resign" (Info 5).

Supporting the above opinion, Informant 4 said

'Dominating affects implementation of project plans and has bad consequences"(Info 4).

This position was buttressed by respondent 3 who said:

"A dominating manager violates statutory and organizational rules and regulations both intentionally and unintentionally because he ignores pieces of advice or does not consult at all. Dominating style dampens work spirit" (Info 3).

Avoidance Style

The findings from the interview conducted in this study revealed that that everyone needs to be checked including the manager himself. So if you use the avoidance style people will not work. As Partcipant 5 said:

…..the dominating style is however, better than the avoidance style. A manager who uses avoidance style in management should better confess his inability to manage and resign (Info 5)

Qualitative data on Employees Performance

The performance of employees in any organization is vital, not only for the growth of the organization, but also for the growth of individual employees. Performance is the act of completion of task within the defined boundaries and benchmarks. It is the degree to which it is believed that workers achieve their goals and fulfill their expected requirements (Ayub & Jehn, 2014) as set and measured by an authority, to pre-defined acceptable standards. Figure 2 shows the Dimension of employee performance in the selected firms.

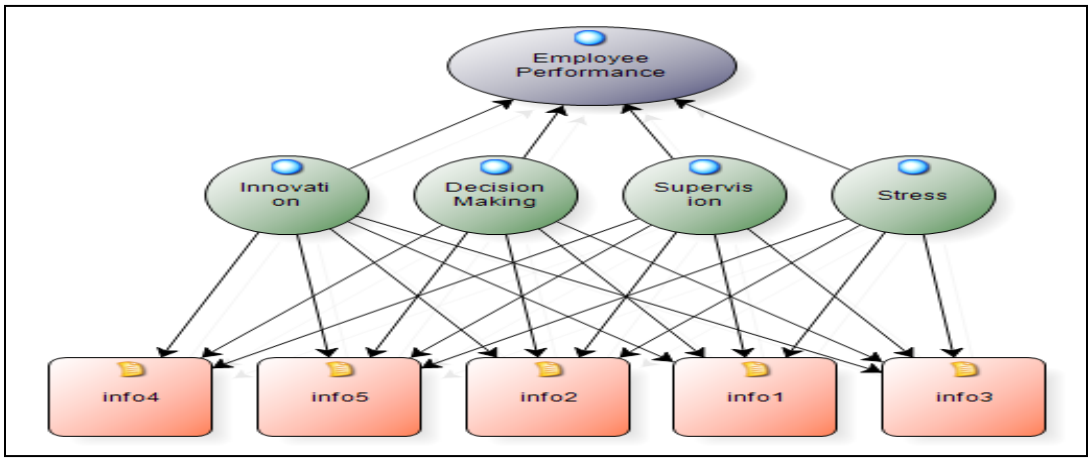


Figure 2 shows the dimension of employee performance studied in the selected firms

Source: Nvivo Output

Innovation is essential for organizational survival and growth and required in almost all employees at all levels of organizations. Innovation emerges from creativity. Creativity refers to the "production of new and useful ideas". Innovation is born by the conversion of the new ideas to products that are acceptable to consumers. Team innovation is defined as the degree to which new and useful ideas, products, services, processes and concepts are developed within time and budget constraints. Although managers must exercise discretion over the implementation of innovations, team discussions empower employees to find and solve problems as they occur. Teams positively impact their organizations by sharing knowledge and creativity, increasing the understanding and acceptance of ideas, and improving commitment and motivation.

However, as many organizations have discovered, teams can also negatively affect the organizations that adopt them if communication is ineffective. Teams can stifle ideas, encourage free riding and even be hotbeds of conflict as a result of unwillingness to communicate with one another. Evidence from the interview granted to participants revealed that dominating style and avoidance style of conflict management kills innovation and

creativity in organizations. Figure 3 below shows the response rate of the participants during the interview on effects of avoidance conflict management style on innovation

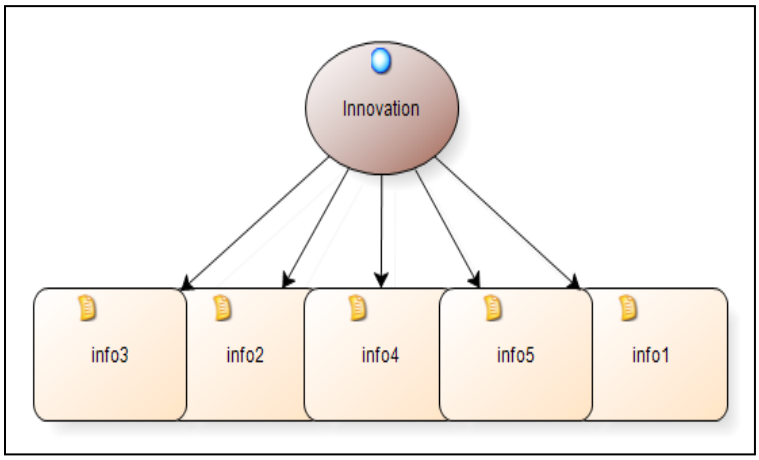


Figure 3: Response rate of the participants during the interview on effects of avoidance conflict management style on innovation

Source: Nvivo Output

Participant 1 said:

"Definitely when you don't know your customers you will be afraid to innovate such products that have high level of uncertainty. Well a dominating manager will not mind producing such products but avoiding manager will do" (Info 1).

According to participant 3

With the free (avoidance) style, people will come out with a good number of ideas that are very innovative but in the long run you the manager will have to check that otherwise ther will be no long er contribute ideas." (Info III).

This was supported by participant 4

if the manager is one who avoids conflicts, innovation will be a mirage because innovation is opposed almost in every organization, especially when it is entirely new which is described as radical or disruptive innovation (Info 4)

Figure 3: Response rate of the participants during the interview on effects of dominating conflict management style on innovation

According to participant 3

"Dominating style kills creativity. With the dominating style ideas will be generated but not genuinely generated. Because it is done under duress, it will not be expanded to innovation. When you use force, in a short while people will think but that will not be sustainable (Info III).

Participant 1 that

If you use the dominating style you curtail workers initiatives. They will be fed-up or annoyed. They will say this dictator, thinks he knows everything, so I won't give him any idea or if I give him an idea he won't take it, so I won't give (Info 1).

In the the opinion of participant II:

"Dominating style may allow the manager to innovate but it doesn't make subordinates creative or innovative. The subordinates cannot convince the manager to accept their ideas that can lead to innovation" (Info 2).

According to participant IV:

"The dominating style kills innovation because people walk away sully and sulky. People walk away dissatisfied. Subordinates become risk averters. So innovation is left to the dominating manager alone (Info 4).

However, participant 5 expressed an opposing opinion that :

"when it comes to innovation you cannot rule out domination. The dominating style makes the leader innovative. This is because when you occupy a position, you are in a driving seat. If you the leader think that you are in the right direction, I think you should move ahead despite any disagreements and criticisms (Info 5).

The negative effects of dominating and avoidance styles on innovation and decision making established in the current study generally agrees with the position of many scholars on the ineffectiveness of those styles in managing conflicts for effective performance inorganizations. For instance, it is established that although the avoiding approach is the most frequently used by managers, the approach aggravates the negative effects of both task and relationship conflicts and provides leeway to save face since avoiding conflict by succumbing to the other party, avoids negative evaluation by the other party.

The. current finding supports the above finding on the dominating style. The finding on the avoidace style also conforms with previous finding that avoidance style is inimical to both team and firm productivity. As participant 5 said:

A manager who uses avoidance style in management should better confess his inability to manage and resign (Info 5)

According to Informant 5: said

There is a paradox in dominating and avoiding conflict: when you dominate you create a problem and when you avoid a problem is created. So you have to take a middle course. The dominating style gives quick results but that is not sustainable. Dominating style hinders work flow and delay solution to problems. Work comes to a halt in the absence of the domineering manager." (Info 5).

Supporting the above opinion, Informant 4 said

'Dominating affects implementation of project plans and has bad consequences" (Info 4).

This posiition was buttressed by respondent 3 who said:

"A dominating manager violates statutory and organizational rules and regulations both intentionally and unintentionally because he ignores pieces of advice or does not consult at all. Dominating style dampens work spirit" (Info 3).

The finding of negative relationship of the avoidance and dominating styles on performance of employees in selected organizations in Ghana might be due to the fact that the country is made of indiduals who are who have much dissimilarity in terms of culture, religion, tribe and political affiliations. The reason is that research on individual dissimilarity has shown that relationship conflict in a team is triggered by visible dissimilarity.

The conflict may result from the tendency to build relationships based on social distances and negative stereotypes that hinder constructive communication and social integration, as well as promoting interpersonal grievances (Ayub & Jehn 2014). That is, relationship conflict will be experienced if we do not "like" someone or believe someone to possess negative attributes (stereotypes).

Sterotyping is a common phenomena among Ghanaians in terms of north-south divide and ethnicity and could be responsible of the finding of negative efects of dominating and avoidance on decision making and innovation in organizations. Group members who see each other as socially distant and/or stereotype pereive each other more negatively and are likely to experience more conflicts than group members with low social distance or less negative stereotypes. These social attitudes and beliefs also mean avoiding those who are perceived as different; that is, withholding information and also disregarding opinion of others.

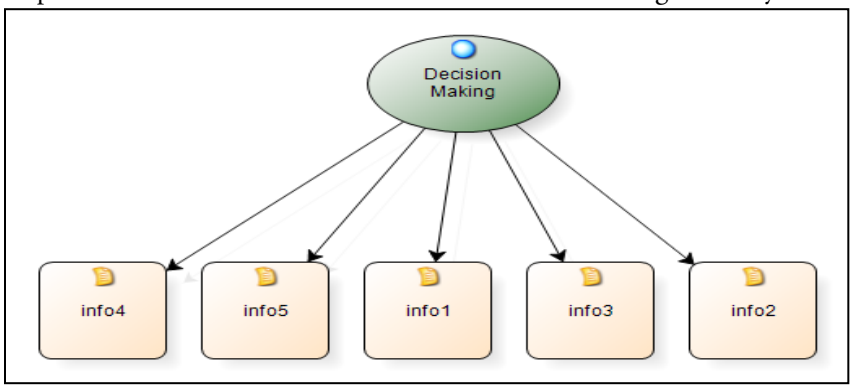
Ghanaian cultures are mainly collectivist cultures where family and friendship ties are high and that lead to conflict avoidance among workers in the country. Previous finding has shown that in organizations where collectivist cultures dominate, emphasis are placed on the avoidance and accommodation styles since collectivists value harmony, security and conformity (Leung, 2008) and tend to give priority to the goals of groups, to share both successes and failures with others, and to have close relationships with members of their in-groups. With the current findings, conflict avoidance is an instrument that suppresses hidden conflicts in the selected organizations in Ghana because the negative effects of the avoidance style on performance of the selected organizations in Ghana where collectivists culture dominates and that confirms previous finding that conflict avoidance is common in collectivist cultures since those cultures require a high degree of self-control to support solidarity, conformity and the maintenance of interdependent relationships.

The degree of the effects of avoidance and dominating styles of conflict management of performance of employees in Ghana could be due to low conflict efficacy of managers of the selected organizations in Ghana

since the impact of conflict management styles on performance has been found to depend on conflict efficacy of the actors. For example, Deutsch (1990) examined the conditions under which teams are productive and found that cooperative conflict management induces high levels of conflict efficacy and productivity, whereas competitive conflict management (dominating style) induces low levels of conflict efficacy and productivity. Efficacy refers to the confidence in one's ability to execute a course of action that will result in good performance.

Qualitative Data on Decision Making

A decision is a pattern of behavior, that produces the most beneficial and essential results in human life .A dominating manager imposes decisions rather than involve team members in decision making while a manager with the style of avoiding conflict would want to please all team members by accepting every opinion even if it is not useful or detrimental to the organization. The information received from the interview revealed that dominating and avoidance styles affect employees' performance. The Figure 9 shows the response rate of the interview on avoidance conflict management styles on decision making.



The Figure 4: Response rate of the interview on avoidance conflict management styles on decision making

Source: Nvivo Output

According to Participant IV:

"In avoiding conflict, you cannot take any decision because every decision affects somebody in the organization. This is so because decisions involve making sacrifices and giving people responsibilities. Some have to sacrifice and take additional duties. So you need to dominate so that people will pretend to agree with you and do what you asked them to do" (Info 4).

Participant II was of the opinion that:

"If I feel that you are the type that dominates, if I have to take a decision I will not. A dominating manager shoots down other people's ideas. There is no consensus building. Yes he makes decisions alone. Although not necessarily but the chances of making radical decisions are high. He can make personal decisions as well. His decisions can be spontaneous or intuitive. It can be anything. If he is one who avoids conflict then he will be depending on others ideas to make decisions or fail to make decisions at all" (Info 2).

This was further buttressed by Participant I who said:

"With the dominating style, decision making do not follow rational process. It is more intuitive and spontaneous because every decision depends on the chief executive. Yes, I agree, the dominating style can lead to radical decisions especially if the decision serves political or personal interest. In this organization the chief executive does not avoid taking decisions because of conflict. He does not depend on people to take decisions. He alone determines what should be done and that affects staff psychologically and affects their development, initiative and enthusiasm" (Info 1).

Another participant said that

"Decisions are better made when the leader is assertive (Dominating). Avoidance produces no decisions. Avoidance makes a manager inefficient and ineffective"(Info 3).

This finding was supported by the results of the unstructured interview. As Partcipant said 4.

"if the manager is one who avoids conflicts, innovation will be a mirage because innovation is opposed almost in every organization, especially when it is entirely new which is described as radical or disruptive innovation (Info 4)"

The effects of the avoidance style on innovation as supported was by participant 1 who said:

"Definitely when you do not know your customers you will be afraid to innovate such products that have high level of uncertainty. Well a dominating manager may not mind producing such products but avoiding manager will do" (Info 1).

The negative relationship between the avoidance of conflict and innovation is in line with the opinion that without "good" fights, teams can become restricted to less innovative working environments, resulting in low performance but disagrees with the view that ,for effective innovation in organizations, some job slack is needed (Laursen, 2012).

The finding also conforms to previous finding that although, the avoiding gives employees freedom to contribute to innovation, it makes managers intrinsically dependent on the creative act of employees in terms of finding new applications for a given idea or technology and of translating and integrating it into local requirements (Burcharth,Knudsen, & Søndergaard, 2017) and this was supported by the statement of participant 3 as follows:

With the free (avoidance) style, people will come out with a good number of ideas that are very innovative but in the long run you the manager will have to check that otherwise ther will be no long er contribute ideas." (Info III).

This finding agrees with previous finding that the avoiding style makes managers intrinsically dependent on the creative act of employees in terms of finding new applications for a given idea or technology and of translating and integrating it into local requirements (Burcharth Knudsen, & Søndergaard, 2017).

Using this style could be disappointing to the manager since the responsibility of innovation rest on his shoulders. In addition, contrary to avoiding conflict it has been explained there are three ways through which cognitive conflict may improve team innovation: first, the synthesis that emerges from contesting of diverse perspectives is generally superior to individual perspectives and may stimulate members to propose new and creative opinions.

The finding is in line with the ideas-task complexity fit which emphasizes the importance of matching the variety and complexity of ideas to the level of the complexity of task (Joshua et al., 2017); that cognitive conflict increases the number of individual judgments that can be used to correct errors that occur during the team innovation process and that is supported by Blackard (2017) who found that cognitive conflict encourages thorough evaluation of an alternatives underlying assumptions. The finding also agrees with the view that thorought diversity in a team helps members maintain multiple potential solutions as the team discusses a problem and that in turn, increases the number of alternatives that members consider.

Other scholars added that task conflict increases team learning such as inter-organizational interactions and joint problem solving skills, generates more creative ideas in inter-organizational teams (Reynalda, Alexander, & Arnulfo,2019). However, some scholars argued that high level of task conflict may lead to cognitive overload or negative emotion, which is harmful to team creativity (Ayoko, 2016). The current findings on avoidance and dominating styles of managing conflict indicates that unless cooperative conflict management styles are used team innovation in organization will be affected. Specifically, the finding of the effect of the avoidance style on innovation conforms to the view that without "good" fights, teams can become restricted to less innovative working environments, resulting in lower performance.

The current finding contradicts the finding of O'Neill, et al. (2013) who examined the moderators of the relationship between types of conflict and team performance, as well as the relationship between different types of conflict and team innovation, team potency and cooperative, dominating and avoidance behaviorsand none of the three types of conflict management was significantly related to innovation. The finding however, agrees with the previous finding that the avoiding style hides cognitive conflict, and has no influence on the transformation from cognitive conflict to affective conflict, however, the cognitive conflicts might burst out when the avoided cognitive conflicts accumulate to a certain level and affect innovation (He et al., 2014).

This finding was confirmed by the results from the unstructured interview. For instance participant 5 said:

> *The dominating style kills innovation because people walk away sully and sulky. People walk away dissatisfied. Subordinates become risk averters. So innovation is left to the dominating manager alone (Info 4).*

This finding is in consonance with previous finding that domination kills intrinsic motivation of employees that is essential for innovation (Joshua et al, 2017). The finding of negative relationship between dominating and innovation supports the opinion that giving employees latitude and freedom to work independently (Burcharth, Knudsen & Søndergaard, 2017) improves innovation. When employees receive encouragement for their creative efforts and do not experience high domineering behavious from their managers, they are more likely to persist in their idea generation endeavoursand even start inventing in their spare time (Ayoko O. B. (2016).

This quantitatve finding was supported during the qualitative findingsfor instance respondent 4 said:

In avoiding conflict, you cannot take any decision because every decision affects somebody in the organization. This is so because decisions involve making sacrifices and giving people responsibilities. Some have to sacrifice and take additional duties. So you need to dominate so that people will pretend to agree with you and do what you asked them to do" (Info 4).

Participant 2 shared similar opinion:

Decisions made under dominating can be spontaneous or intuitive. It can be anything. If the manager is one who avoids conflict then he will be depending on others ideas to make decisions or fail to make decisions at all." (Info 2).

The current finding on the effect of the style on decision making agrees with previous finding that that avoidant conflict management style was a positive predictor of avoidant decision making (Ayoko, 2016) and is also in line with the suggestion that both distributive and integrative conflict management styles will result in decision making outcomes that are superior to those obtained with the avoidance style because these styles synthesize diverse perspectives and interpretations, whereas avoidance does not. A manager with the style of avoiding conflict would want to please all team members by accepting every opinion even if it is detrimental to the organization.

The results of the unstructured interviews corroboarted this statistical finding: Informant 1 noted that

With the domineering style, decisions do not follow rational process. It is more intuitive and spontaneous because every decision depends on the chief executive. the dominating style can lead to radical decisions especially if the decision serves political or personal interest." (Info 1).

The current finding of the effect of dominating style on effective decision making supports the theory that dominating is not an efficient conflict management strategy. The current finding agrees with previous finding that the dominating conflict management style was a positive predictor of avoidant decision making (Shabbir Attah & Adil., 2014). The finding is in line with revious findings that perceptions of a fair process in arriving at a decision have important and beneficial effects apart from perceptions of the decision result. According to the interview, participation and voice have positive associations with team effectiveness because when all opinions are heard, team members tend to be satisfied with the process and more committed to the decision, even if they disagree with it.

A dominating manager imposes decisions rather than involve team members in decision making and that explains the current finding of negative effect of dominating on decision. Employees who get the freedom to make decisions in a timely and flexible manner are predicted to exhibit greater performance than those who are required to consult top management at all times because of dominating style (Burcharth, Knudsen & Søndergaard, 2017).

The current finding provides empirical support to the view that conflict managed effectively improves decision making by expanding the range of alternatives, increasing close scrutiny of decision options, fostering calculated risks, and enhancing cohesiveness; managed ineffectively, conflict results in dysfunctional behaviors and low group productivity (Loughry & Amason, 2014).

The finding is also in line with the finding of Loughry and Amason (2014) that the effectiveness of decision making depended on decision makers' ability to extract a range of competing interpretations about the issues in the decision context, and synthesize these interpretations into a decision acceptable to the entire group or organization and therefore the decisions made by the dominating style which imposes decisions on teams will be ineffective. The current finds lends support to the

findings view of Agarwal and Adjirackor (2016) that a reallocation of decision rights was necessary to improve the sourcing and use of knowledge held by customers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study examined the impact of various conflict management styles on employee performance in Northern Ghana public service. The qualitative analysis established that the dominating style does not promote radical innovation in organizations which considered as the best form of innovation in organizations and thus not a good style for innovation in organizations. It is also established that the avoidance style mostly leads to avoidant decisions in organizations and also the avoidance style leads to avoidance of radical innovation which also bad for organizayions and therefore the avoidance style is not not good for decision making and innovation in organizations. In effect among all the five conflict management styles, the avoidance style is the most abhorred in management. Finally, the current findings have added to the stock of knowledge in the study of conflict management in organizations and provoked further research in the area of conflict management and performance of employees. Although both the dominating and the avoidance styles were found to have negative effects on the performance of employees, the dominating style was found to have some better effect on performance when compared with the avoidance style. The current finding on the effect of the dominating and avoidance styles on employee's performance confirms previous research findings that the most effective way of dealing with task conflicts in organizations is using cooperative conflict management styes (integrating, compromise and collaborating) in combination with dominating. Therefore, the study recommended that the district assemblies in Northern region of Ghana face a daunting challenge in conflict management and therefore conflict management education is essential to guarantee high level of productivity under the umbrella of team work and joint responsibilities amongst the employees. The study therefore recommend that employee should, imbibe the spirit of sacrifice and selfnessness as a means of ensuring that conflicts are nipped at the bud before escalating. The study also recommend that dominating style is appropriate to use when it's more important to reach a solution than for the solution to be great, a deadline is rapidly approaching, you're at an impasse, or you need a temporary solution for the moment.

CONCLUSION

The digital gap has inhibited much of the adoption and clearly, an institution would have to mitigate each gap in order to successfully adopt ICT for learning. It is reasonable to conclude that the digital gap has disabled considerations of learning theories in ICT adoption in developing countries like Uganda. That is, there are so many basic needs to mitigate the digital gap before lecturers in Uganda can start to worry about the integration of learning theories and ICT.

The solution is to quickly sort the digital gap and then immediately start to seriously identify ICTs to sort challenges in learning.

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