IMPACT OF INTRA-GROUP CONFLICT ON ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE: ALIENATING ROLE OF CROSS CULTURALISM

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Abstract

In this study, a model was developed to describe relationships between impacts of intra-group conflict on organizational performance – alienating the role of cross culturalism. To identify the impact of intra-group conflict on organizational performance, data were collected from 170 staff of Dangote Cement Company located in Ibese, Ogun State, Nigeria. Data were analyzed using SPSS. Findings indicated that intra-group conflict had direct negative effects on organizational performance and effectiveness. Furthermore, our findings suggest that reducing intra-group conflict and providing team members with the abilities to manage conflict effectively is a way to increase organizational performance and implement strategies able to decrease a stressful work environment and increase team-building activities. At the end, conclusion, recommendations, limitations, and future research directions were also indicated.

Keywords: Cognitive Task Conflict, Cross Culturalism, Emotional Conflict, Intra-group conflict, Organizational Performance

Introduction

Conflict is normally viewed as difference of interests or ideas (Adomi & Ozioma Anie, 2006). Organizational conflict speaks about disagreement that happens when the goals of different persons or groups are mismatched and affects each other's performance which makes it difficult in achieving their objectives (Karatepe & Tekinkus, 2006). It is difficult to avoid conflict during the organizational life time; because of different stakeholders outside the organization and within the organization having different goals such as employer and employee are often incompatible.

Conflict is an important aspect of life where individuals compete for jobs, resources, authority, and safety. It is hard to deal with conflict, because it produces emotions when the individuals feel threatened, thereby creates tension, anxiety inducing the response of anger and fight (Zepeda, 2006). Intra-group conflicts arise from either task or relationship (Amason, 1996; Pelled, Eisenhardt & Xin, 1999). Relationship conflict or emotional conflict described by the personality clashes or negative emotional interaction between two or more people, who are connected with rigidity, dislike, and annoyance. Whereas, task conflict mentions the divergences about content of decisions and different views, thoughts, ideas, key decision areas and procedures, among group members (Guerra, Martínez, Munduate & Medina, 2005). Based on social information handling theories of Crocker, Fiske & Taylor (1984) on one hand, and self-categorization theory of Turner (1987) on the other hand, many researchers have submitted in their findings that groups which are culturally diverse face more negative outcomes of groups crises than the groups having cultural similarity just because of preference; bias against members; mistakes in communication; different perceptions; and acknowledgement among the members of group (Canen & Canen, 2008).

Due to cultural Differences, individuals have different beliefs and values. As a result, individuals have different approaches and perceptions to conflict, thus, it can be difficult to resolve conflict and affect the mechanism of resolution. Moreover, these undesirable features affect the performance of culturally diverse group. It is likely that the cross culturalisim will be negatively related to the perceived performance of the group. Performance is recognized as one of the important indicators of the group efficacy (Gladstein, 1984) and often used as an outcome variable in the literature of intra-group conflict (Jehn, 1994; Jehn, 1995). Different researchers have found out that all the three forms of conflict (Relationship, Process, and Task Conflict) have differential influence on effectiveness of a group in

relation to performance outcomes, as it reduces mutual understanding due to relationship conflict, hence prevents the completion of group tasks (Vodosek, 2007).

Despite the fact that intra-group conflict in organizations has seized the attention of researchers many times and also produced substantial research outcomes, still a vast portion of the variance remains unanswered. There is then a need to probe other variables, such as cross culturalism, particularly in the context of Dangote Cement Company located in Ibese, Ogun State, Nigeria where change and growth is visible in the service industry.

This sector is more diversified in the form of its workforce and investment. This scenario has incited to explore the new working environment in Dangote Cement Company located in Ibese, Ogun State, Nigeria i.e., the interrelationship between behavioral features and performance. Aiming at this, one of the most thriving industries of Nigeria service sector is selected for the research i.e. Dangote Cement Company located in Ibese, Ogun State, Nigeria. Therefore, this empirical study is conducted to find whether and to what extent Cross culturalisim moderates the relationship between Intra-group Conflict and Group outcomes. This study serve the management to have better understanding of how Intra-group conflicts (Cognitive Task Conflict and Emotional Conflict) affect the group output or performance and how cross culturalisim of employees positively or negatively influence the rising Intra-group conflicts. The findings of this study will help the management to cope with the problems of Intra-group conflicts affecting group outcomes or performance. The study is also aimed at handling conflicts in the organizations and recommending useful means of using conflict to boost the creativeness and group outcomes, thereby making the organization globally competitive.

Intra-group Conflict

Intragroup Conflict is a state when group members see disagreements, divergences and mismatched thoughts or ideas amongst them (Vodosek, 2007). Intra-group conflict is distinct as it develops from implicit or real mismatches among group members (Appelbaum, Shapiro, & Elbaz, 1998). Earlier empirical studies on intra-group conflicts have mostly stressed on conflicts rising from either task or relationship issues (Amason, 1996).

Literatures express the presence of four types of organizational conflicts. First being interpersonal conflict. This type of conflict occurs between individuals when they face interference in their domains of work responsibilities by another person and harming or disrupting their efforts towards achieving their goals and objectives. The second form of conflict is Intra-group conflict which refers to a conflict between two or more members of a same group or team. Third type is Inter-group conflict; this type of conflict occurs between two or more groups or teams. The fourth form of conflict is Inter-organizational conflict that occurs across the organizations

Within the understanding of the scope of conflict is Conflict of Rapport. This form of crisis is described to express relational mismatches amongst the group members which are connected with strain, dislike, and frustration. Also, Task Conflict, which may refer to the disparities and inconsistencies among group members about the content of their judgments, conclusions and encompasses dissimilarities in perspectives, notions and views, key decision areas and procedures (Pelled, Eisenhardt & Xin, 1999).

Different forms of conflict have inconsistent impact on group efficacy in view of behavioral and performance aftermaths (Vodosek, 2007). Recent studies have identified another unique kind of conflict, labeled as Process Conflict (Korsgaard, Ployhart & Ulrich, 2014; Zeitzoff, 2013). Process Conflict is the consciousness about the disagreements featuring different facets of task accomplishment. Precisely, Process Conflict refers to matters of responsibility; resource allocation like who will do what and to what extent he/she will be held responsible for his/her acts (Jehn & Mannix, 2001).

In addition, Literature has supported the fact that conflict may help decision makers or the management in evaluating the job performance of groups and may induce more commitment and motivation among the group members towards fulfilling the organizational objectives (Correll, Park, & Smith, 2008).

Other forms of conflict include task oriented conflict such as Cognitive Task Conflict, which may have diverse influences on group working and group outcomes identified as organizational performance. Task oriented conflict is more expected to have constructive influence on group working (Chuang & Zikic, 2004). There is not a perfect association between Task Conflict and Organizational performance though but many researchers have found that exceedingly high levels of Task Conflict occasionally produce less contentment and obligation among the group

members towards team's objectives; hence Task Conflict shares both negative and positive impact on organizational performance (DeChurch, Hamilton & Haas, 2007). Task Type was identified as moderator between Task Conflict and Organizational performance. According to Amason (1996) study, Task Conflict was found more valuable to the groups accomplishing non-repetitive tasks and not suitable to the groups doing normal routine tasks. As an outcome, groups with non-defined tasks or performing different tasks are more inclined to get benefited from Task oriented conflict. It is vital to discover the facilitating approach under the circumstances of Task Conflict. Many other research findings have recognized the progressive influences of Task Conflict like better decision making, and improved productivity. Therefore, Task Conflicts may augment the task application of members included; like producing or sharing new information, enhanced communication, mutual or shared information and group problem resolving (Rispens, 2009).

Conflict researchers have proposed that relationship conflict may activate task conflict as a consequence of an effort by a group member in creating problems for his other group mate. As Simons & Peterson (2000) hypothesized below Hypothesis 1: Cognitive Task Conflict will negatively influence the Organizational performance and state of mind. The description is incorporating the main feelings like annoyance, happiness, affection, social feelings like disgrace, distrust, guilt as well as concepts like distress, emotions and dispositions. Feeling and emotionality are the terms which have been used in substitution for each other in the literature (Nair, 2008). Relationship Conflict is positively related with group Emotional Conflict and Organizational performance. The emotional conflict may be relationship oriented (Simons & Peterson, 2000). The empirical study on the effects of relationship conflict has mostly reinforced these theoretical research findings.

Emotionality is broadly described as particular sentimental members' opinions of inequality and negatively related to observed organizational performance (Vodosek, 2007). As a consequence, relationship conflict negatively impact on organizational performance and also moderates the relationship between task-oriented conflict and organizational performance (Hjerto & Kuvaas, 2009). Quite recently, Guerra, Martínez, Munduate & Medina (2005) also highlighted that high level of task conflict could trigger relationship conflict amongst the group members and also debated that the differences among the group members about any task may generate negative sentiments and as a consequence creates relationship conflict.

Cross Culturalism and Organizational Performance

The concept of culture has been defined in many different ways. Bond & Smith (1996); Kroeber & Kluckhohn (1952) variously emphasized its cognitive, behavioral, symbolic, value-related, linguistic, historical, or geographic characteristics (Triandis, 1996).

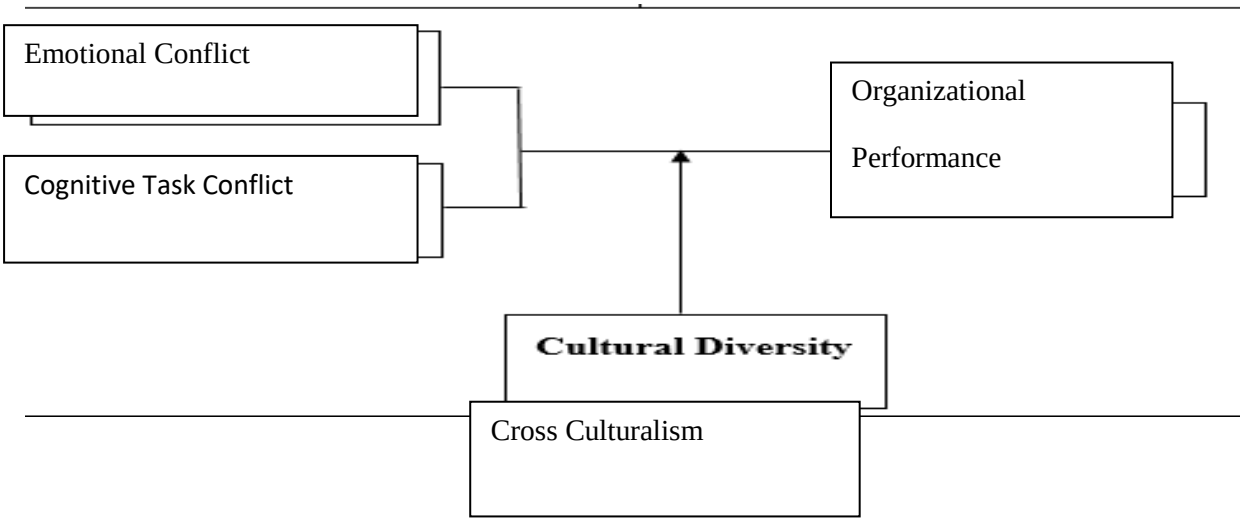
In an effort to reconcile these different definitions, Triandis (1995) suggests that the concept of a cultural syndrome may facilitate the understanding of culture and cultural differences. The notion of culture is described through various diverse means and techniques (Vodosek, 2007). Those various means emphasize its intellectual, social, representational, value-related, stated, historic, or geographical features. The main attention of diverse researches have been on plugging in the geographical variances amongst the group members such as age, sex, or race on their way towards team level operations like team societal assimilation and productivity (Harrison, Price, Gavin & Florey, 2002). Individualism and Collectivism are the situations or circumstances usually referenced as to differentiate between the cultures (Hofstede, 1980).

A societal shape related to people's acknowledged individuality from collective farm with their own individual likings, necessities and objectives is referred to as Individualism. In a divergence way, people's professed interdependence with Collectives and the likings, necessities and objectives are mutual with others is termed as Collectivism (Hofstede, 2011). There are also basic potentials which are not so simply or hastily judged by others like talents, aptitudes, beliefs, knowledge and behaviors. These characteristics require more time, interpersonal meetings, and communication to be known by others. These fundamental elements are very so often mentioned as imperceptible or very difficult to understand. Divergences in expertise and knowledge are also deliberated as functional diversity (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998).

For this study, Organizational performance acts as the dependent variable which will possibly depict the influence of independent variable Intra-Group Conflict measured by Cognitive Task Conflict and Emotional Conflict. Task conflict is the disagreement on processes and procedures of performing, while the emotional conflict reflects the personality differences, attitudes and different conflicting behaviors arising among different individuals. The Cross culturalism will act as a moderating variable. Cross culturalisim would influence the relationship positively or

negatively between different forms of Intra-group Conflict (Emotional Conflict and Cognitive Task Conflict) and Organizational performance.

Figure1: TheoreticalFramework



Methods

The business and operations of the organization encompassed mining engineering, production, and operation services. The research access to these organizations was made possible using private and professional contacts for the conduct of survey and using a private organization in the state as sample. The questionnaires were distributed to the available male and female senior managers, managers, team leads and employees at the junior levels in the organizational units. All of the completed questionnaires were collected by the authors. These questionnaires also had a cover page stating the purpose and scope of the research by ensuring the anonymity of the respondents.

Questionnaire/Tool

28 items questionnaire is used to measure the relationship between different forms of Intra-group Conflict and the Organizational performance and the influence of Cross culturalisim on this relationship. We measured relationship conflict ($\alpha = 0.77$) and task conflict ($\alpha = 0.72$) with the scales developed by Jehn (1995). A sample item for this scale is "how much disagreement among group members is there about how tasks should be accomplished?" perceived performance of the group was measured with eight-item organizational performance scale that taps into a broad range of performance dimensions, such as meeting schedules and being innovative (α= 0:73). Each form of Intra-group conflict is measured by five different items using 5-likert scale of 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree and higher mean values showed high levels of corresponding trait. The statements examples include "Narrow-mindedness or envy usually drives the conflict in our workgroup", "When differences occur, some group members tries to put themselves forward at the expense of others", "The conflict is also caused by personal clashes in our group", "There are tendencies of anger and aggression between some persons in our group", "There is a high degree of emotional conflict in our workgroup". The statements examples include "During the conflict, our group is concerned about solving problems by using a sensible and rational procedure", "Our disagreements are tasks oriented and put reasons before emotions", "While disagreeing on the subject matter, feelings are kept under control and argued in a logical and analytical manner", "Conflict of ideas occur in our work group", "There are frequent disagreements within our workgroup about the tasks we are working on". The statements examples for Organizational performanceinclude "Our group works in cohesion", "We have high group spirit", "The conflict affects organizational performance", "Our group often fails to perform essential duties", "Our group meets all the formal performance requirements of the assigned tasks". The statements examples for Cross culturalisiminclude "Our group members belongs to different regions of Nigeria", "Our group members speak different mother tongues", "Our group members are from different ethnicity", "Our group members have different educational level", "Our group members have variety of abilities", "Our group members have different interpersonal skills", "Considering all, our group is a culturally diverse group". The reliability approximations found for Emotional Conflict Cronbach's Alpha 0.77, Cognitive Task Conflict

Cronbach's Alpha 0.72, Organizational performance Cronbach's Alpha 0.73, and Cross culturalisim Cronbach's Alpha .84

Control Variables

In this study, gender, age, education and tenure were taken as control variables. Prior research studies show that these demographic variables are predictors of organizational performance.

CorrelationAnalysis

Table1showsthecorrelationcoefficientsbetweendifferent variables of the study. The correlation coefficientranges between -1 and + 1. A correlation value of above 0.5depictsastrongpositiveassociationbetweenthevariables.It isnotedthatalmostallthevariablesofthestudyi.e.cognitive task conflict, emotional conflict and Cross Culturalism have a significant correlation with the dependent variable of Organizational performance ($p<0.05$). Multiple regression analysis was conducted to see the combined effect of all in dependent variables over the dependent variable of Organizational performance. The R-square value ($R2 = 0.19$) shows that 19% variance in the dependent variable of Organizational performance is explained by the independent variables, emotional conflict and cognitive task conflict.

Table1: Correlationsbetweenmeasures

Variable	Mean	S.D.	OP	EC	CTC	CD
OP	3.6892	0.4897	1			
EC	3.6766	0.5856	-.465**	1		
CTC	3.6475	0.5896	-.372**	.501**	1	
CD	3.6259	0.5914	.466**	.391**	.565**	1

Note.**p<0.01,N=170OP=Organizational performance,EC=emotionalconflict,CTC=cognitivetask conflict,CC=Cross Culturalism.

**Correlationissignificantatthe0.01 level(2-tailed).
*Correlationissignificantatthe0.05level(2-tailed).

Table2: Regressionstatistics

Variable	Beta	t-value	p-value
EmotionalConflict	-0.072	-0.598	0.011
CognitiveTaskConflict	-0.128	-1.529	0.028
R-square 0.19			

Results

Table 2 shows the beta values and significance values oftheindependentvariables. Emotional Conflict has a significant negative relationship with organizational performance ($p < .05$; $\beta = -.072$) which means that emotional conflict have significant impact on organizational performance. Likewise, cognitive task conflict ($p < .05$; $\beta = -.128$) also have significant negative impact on organizational performance as evident from the results of regression analysis. In order to see whether cross culturalism moderates, the relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable of organizational performance, a moderated regression analysis was carried on. Table3showstheresultsof moderatedregressionanalysis.

Table3: Moderated RegressionAnalysis

Interactionterm	B	t-value	p-value
ECxCD	1.279	2.593	0.010**
CTCxCD	1.978	3.956	0.000**

EC=emotional conflict, CC=Cross Culturalism, CTC= cognitivetaskconflict,*p<.05,**p<.01,***p<.001

Moderated regression analyses show that cross culturalism significantly moderates the relationship between value emotional conflict ($p < .05$; $\beta = 1.279$), cognitive task conflict ($p < .05$; $\beta = 1.978$) and organizational performance.

The findings of this study represent a contribution to the literature on intra-group conflict and show that intra-group conflict has negative relationship with organizational performance, and cross culturalism, and also moderate this relationship. The findings of this study are highly needed in light of the proliferation of culturally diverse groups in organizations.

On the basis of the above analysis support has been found for hypothesis. However, high levels of task conflict can lead to reduced member commitment and performance of the group. Task conflict had a negative impact on the performance of groups working on routine tasks, but a curvilinear effect on the performance of groups working on non-routine tasks. Low and high levels of task conflict are detrimental, but medium levels of task conflict are beneficial, since they promote critical evaluation of issues facing the group. Similarly, De Dreu (2006) found that work teams with moderate levels of task conflict were more innovative than teams with low or high levels of task conflict. The positive relationship between task conflict and group outcomes, however, may not be generic. De Dreu & Weingart (2003) found in their meta-analysis that task conflict is generally negatively correlated with group member satisfaction and organizational performance. In most organizational contexts, it is impossible, and for various reasons undesirable, to assemble culturally homogeneous groups that are less prone to intra-group conflict and unfavorable group outcomes. Even though cultural learning tends to be a long process establishing explicit expectations among group members and engaging employees in clear psychological contracts. Rousseau (1995) explained that what group members can expect to receive and give are likely to have a homogenizing effect on the attitudes, beliefs, norms, role definitions, and values of group members. This effect, lead to less conflict and more favorable group outcomes.

In addition, cross-cultural training programs that develop cognitive, affective, and behavioral knowledge about cultural differences are likely to be effective means for attenuating the unfavorable impact of cross culturalism on group conflict and group outcomes.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conflicts are inevitable among coworkers in work groups. Conflict in all cultures is unavoidable, but every culture has a changed approach of managing it from the other and its own way of dealing with it. Top Management of companies like Multinational companies understand the importance of multicultural differences when having international alliances, acquisitions or mergers, therefore in recent era, conflict management has become more important and vital for the effective functioning of the organizations (Kim, Wang, Kondo & Kim, 2007). Effective conflict management provides opportunities for the members of group to understand each other in a better way and enhance their organizational performance, interpersonal skills and building rapport (Kim, Wang, Kondo & Kim, 2007). The term Intra-cultural relationship provides group decision-making, which leads to effective decision making, and an organization can gain great benefit of the multicultural experiences and diversified knowledge and skills if it is managed usefully (Boonsathorn, 2007).

Evidence from the present study, however, suggests that cross culturalism moderate the relationship between intra-group conflict and organizational performance. The findings of this study corroborate the findings from previous research. However, the findings clearly prove research findings that task conflict and emotional conflict has a negative effect on organizational performance.

This study presents itself useful for policy makers and academic literature. For policy makers, it is important in a sense that it will provide a bridge to them to remove negative conflict causatives and maintain a level of conflict management to an extent where intra-cultural cooperation plays a role scale up organizational performance. From academic point of view, it is an extension in literature. Besides the foregoing, the study has certain limitations. As with all studies, the findings of this paper should be considered in light of its limitations. Limitations that warrant discussion are the cross-sectional design of the study, potential common method bias, the generalization of the findings, and the low sample size.

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