

# Assessment of Effective Conflict Management Practice in Marketing Organizations in Kogi State

Juwon Johnson Orugun\*, Ibidunni Fausat Orugun\*\*, Momoh I. Yalo\*\*\*

\*Department of Business Administration, Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria

\*\*Department of Banking and Finance, Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria

\*\*\*Department of Marketing, Federal Polytechnic, Idah, Nigeria  
e-mail: orugunjuwonjohnson@gmail.com

## Abstract

*This study focused on the effect of Conflict Management Practice and performance of marketing organizations in Kogi State. Survey Research Design was used. The target population for this study was 838. The sample size of 396 was selected from the target population. All data were analyzed using frequency distribution table, descriptive statistics, Ordinary Linear Regression, and Ordered Probit Regression. Finding showed that more than average of the variation in the performance of marketing organization in Kogi State was significantly predicted by effective Conflict Management Practice. Furthermore, finding showed that performance (market share) was possibly predicted by conflict variables (communication gap, low financial motivator, the activities of cultism, ethnicity, lack of tolerance among employees), and that communication gap, low financial motivator and lack of tolerance among employees has significant influence on the competitiveness of marketing organizations in Kogi State. It was concluded that the management of conflict in the marketing organizations in Kogi State was evidently effective. It was recommended that the management of the marketing organizations in Kogi State should sustain their effective conflict management approach or find more cost-benefit approach (such as long term oriented approach like Strategic Conflict Management approach) to managing conflict to improve the performance of their organizations.*

**Keywords:** Conflict Management; Communication Gap; Marketing Organization; Financial Motivator; Market Share

**JEL Classification:** D29; D74

## Introduction

It is a known fact that conflict is cardinal to marketing organizational life. In fact, Ikeda, Veludo-de-Oliveira and Campomar (2005) also noted that since the marketing environment is very competitive, it is natural that conflicts emerge. Marketing organizations war against themselves to be the market leader. Conflicts occur among marketing organizations in competition scenarios, and equally among their employees who rival based on perceptions and pursuance of goals. There is often inevitable network of interaction, struggles for promotion and display of intelligent quotient among employees. Richard and Russell (2014) expressed that there is richness and complexity in the network of relationships, dreams and fears among employees that make up the workplace. This understanding made Spaho (2013) to posit that

conflict is an essential and unavoidable human phenomenon because where there is human interaction, dreams and fears; there is a likelihood of personal likes and dislikes. Longe (2015) argued that conflict is by nature an ever present process and more likely to occur in hierarchical organizations where people with divergent view, opinion and background interact.

The management of conflict in marketing organizations is a necessary task. Managing conflict may not necessarily mean to suppress or resolve all conflicts, but to montage them in order to enhance and not to detract from performance. Unmanaged conflicts are likely to cause aberration and can be destructive at all times. Osad and Osas (2013) argued that conflict in work-relations is not an aberration since it creates or provides an opportunity for correction and reconciliation for the betterment of both the marketing organization and the workers. Ikeda *et al.* (2005) added that conflicts in marketing could be enriching as it stimulates the creativeness necessary to be successful in the market. The position of these authors is against the submission of previous studies that conflicts are destructive.

It is observed that some marketing organizations in Kogi State consider the conflicts among their employees as being an aberration. From their perception, the conflicts among their employees are destructive. Akanji (2005) is of the tenet that managed conflict may induce its constructiveness, while unmanaged conflict heats up the work environment to bring about dislocation and polarization of the entire group with reduction in productivity and job performance. Studies (such as Simon: and Peterson, 2000; Rahim, 2011; Khan, Langove, Shah, and Javid, 2015) have proven that conflict does not regularly produce negative work-life result. Though the big controversy caused by the research findings of previous studies (such as De Brett and Weingart, 2003; Jehn and Mannix, 2001; Tepper, Moss, and Duffy, 2011) is that conflicts have negative implications.

It is observed that some factors induce the destructive nature of conflicts based on the reactive managerial approach of the marketing organizations in Kogi State. These factors are communication gap, low financial motivator, the activities of cultism, ethnicity and lack of tolerance among others. There is possibility that increasing level of these factors can cause detraction in the performance of marketing organizations in Kogi State. In their study, Shonubi and Akintaro (2016) asserted that product market performance (such as sales, market share, etc) is affected by communication in the channels. Bennett and Savani (2004) found that organization-wide reward systems influence the levels of dysfunctional conflict in businesses. This implies that low financial motivator is instrumental to low performance in the marketing organizations because dysfunctional conflict detracts performance. A retrospective unempirical evaluation of situations in some marketing organizations shows that cultism is practiced among some employees outside the organization. Few employees who practice cultism are likely to establish fear in others during conflict, and the reactive managerial approach on such situation may be unproductive. This study therefore investigated conflict management and the effect of conflict factors on the performance of marketing organization in Kogi State.

## **Literature Review**

There have been several attempts by scholars and authors to give holistic definitions of workplace conflict. But despite the divergent meanings the term has attracted several common ideas underlining it. Conflict is a process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affects, something that the first party cares about. Obi (2012) defined conflict as an act of discontentment and contention which either the workers or employers of labour utilize to put excessive pressure against each other so as to get their demands. Authors (such as Henry, 2009; Ikeda *et al.*, 2005; Azamoza, 2004; Ajala and Oghenekohwo, 2002) also shares in this view, as it is consistent with descriptions of workplace conflict as a dispute that occurs when interests, goals or values of different individuals or groups

are incompatible with each other in organizations. On this premise, Longe (2015) stressed that workplace conflict within the context of employment relationship can be regarded as an inevitable clash of interests and resulting disputes of varying intensity between and within any or all of the active actors in organizations. It is evident from the authors' views that conflicts are disputes between employees and that they occur in organizations. Apparently, what is more emphasized in marketing literature is conflicts between distribution channels (Ikeda *et al.*, 2005)

Conflict is a condition that arises whenever the perceived interests of an individual or group clash with those of another individual or group in such a way that strong emotions are aroused and compromise is not considered to be an option. This definition implies that conflicts exist whenever an action by one party is perceived as preventing or interfering with the goals, need, or actions of another party. It equally shows that conflict is a perception issue- the parties to the conflict must perceive that it exists or it does not exist.

Marketing organizations have a list of goals to be accomplished through their employees' efforts. This makes scholars to uphold that organization is a social unit of people that is structured and managed to meet a need or to pursue collective goals. Bradford and Burk (2005) identified three significant aspect of organization covered by all descriptions. These include: people, goals and system. The performance of marketing organizational is dependent on a systematic change which may be facilitated by these people during conflict situation. Conflict is observed as the major issue that is central and critical features of marketing organizations' performance. Unmanaged conflict may result in negative change which may affect marketing organizations' performance inversely.

Over the years, there have been series of attempt to investigate the causative factors of workplace conflict. According to Ifeanyi (2004), research suggest that it is probable that causes of conflicts are not highly correlated with goal and objective achievement in situations of routine behaviors where procedures are well defined and environment is stable. In these circumstances, Umar (2000) had asserted that conflict variables are probably more related to personality, autonomy reasons, functional interdependence and status. In another way, conflict may also break out when one party prevents the goal achievement of the other party. Another reason pointed for the occurrence of conflicts is the asymmetric degree of interdependence that affects the level of trust and commitment of the groups (Ikeda *et al.*, 2005).

However, the study conducted by Hotepo, Asokere, Abdul Azeez and Ajemuigbolohun (2010) found lack of resources, different expectation, competition, lack of cooperation, interdependence and communication problems as factors that have caused conflicts in the Nigerian organizations, of which Marketing organizations is not an exemption. Even the previous study conducted by Tsevendorj (2008) rated communication failure, perception, values and culture problems as moderately serious sources of conflict. Bennett and Savani (2004) established financial reward can result to conflict when it is assumed unfavourable by the employees. The literatures reviewed did not show that the activities of cultism, ethnicity, lack of tolerance among employees cannot result into conflicts in marketing organizations.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study considers the Maturity and Immaturity Theory of conflict. According to Imobighe (2003), Maturity- immaturity Theory was propounded by Chris Argyris in *Personality and Organization*. The theory is one of the many theories of conflict that seek to explain human behavior in any organization. Imobighe (2003) stated that the theory assumes that a persons' development is processed along a continuous break of an immaturity situation to a maturity situation. A mature person is believed to possess certain attribute for having self-control in conflict situation. This implies that maturity among employees can detract conflicts resulting from cultism, ethnicity and lack of tolerance. This maturity may be interrupted whenever the marketing organizations fail to encourage the self-control of employees (Nnoli, 1998). In other

words, conflicts that are not well managed are expected to interrupt maturity situation, thereby leading to loss of self-control and performance of the employees of marketing organizations. On the other hand, immaturity situation occurs when employees have lost self-control over conflict situations.

## Methodology

For this study, survey research was adopted. The target population for this study was 838 employees of some selected marketing organizations in Kogi State. The study adopted the multi-stage sampling technique. A sample size of 396 respondents was drawn using Krejcie and Morgan' (1970) sampling table. The table is presented in Appendix. Data were collected through questionnaire. The validity was ensured by subjecting the research instruments to a panel of experts who reviewed them and make necessary corrections before it was administered. Cronbach alpha was used to establish reliability of the instrument. The results are market share (0.72), Communication gap (0.85), low financial motivator (0.71), activities of cultism (0.79), ethnicity (0.80) and lack of tolerance (0.70). All data were analysed using frequency distribution table, descriptive statistics, Ordinary Linear Regression, and Ordered Probit Regression.

## Data Analysis and Result

**Table 1.** Questionnaire Administration

Questionnaire	Frequency	Percentage
Administered	368	100
Returned	291	79.08
Unreturned	77	20.92

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 1 shows that 368 questionnaires (100%) were administered; 291 questionnaires (79.08%) were returned while 77 questionnaires (20.92%) were not returned. The analysis in this section is based on the returned questionnaires.

**Table 2.** Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Responses	Frequency	Percent
<b>Age Distribution</b>		
15 to 25 years	32	11.0
26 to 36 years	80	27.5
37 to 47 years	87	29.9
48 to 58 years	55	18.9
59 years and above	37	12.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	134	46.0
Female	157	54.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	92	31.6
Married	76	26.1
Divorce	82	28.2
widow(er)	41	14.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Table 2 (cont.)*

<b>Qualifications</b>		
PSLC	41	14.1
SSCE	63	21.6
OND/NCE	78	26.8
HND/B.Sc	69	23.7
M.Sc and above	40	13.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source:* Field Survey, 2019

Table 2 shows the age of respondents. It is observed that 32 respondents representing 11.0% were within the age range of 15 to 25 years; 80 respondents representing 27.5% were within the age range of 26 to 36 years; 87 respondents representing 29.9% were within the age range of 37 to 47 years; 55 respondents representing 18.9% were within the age range of 48 to 58 years; and 37 respondents representing 12.7% were 58 years and above. The table above shows that majority of the employees of the marketing organizations falls within the age range of 37 to 47 years.

Table 2 shows the sex of respondents. From the table above, it is observed that 134 respondents representing 46.0% were male; and 157 respondents representing 54.0% were female. Majority of the employees of the marketing organizations in the time of survey were female.

Table 2 shows the marital status of respondents. It is observed that 92 respondents representing 31.6% were single; 76 respondents representing 26.1% were married; 82 respondents representing 28.2% were divorcees; and 41 respondents representing 14.1% were widow(er). The implication of this is that majority of the employees of the marketing organizations in the study area were single.

Table 2 shows the academic qualifications of respondents. It is identified that 41 respondents representing 14.1% were holders of primary school leaving certificate; 63 respondents representing 21.6% were holders of secondary school certificate; 78 respondents representing 26.8% were holders of Diploma certificate or its equivalence; 69 respondents representing 23.7% were holders of Bachelor of Science or Higher National Diploma certificate; and 40 respondents representing 13.7% were holders of master degree certificate and above. This shows that the majority of the employees of the marketing organizations in the study area were holder of Diploma or its equivalence.

**Table 3.** Showing the descriptive statistics of conflict inducing variables

<b>Responses</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Communication gap	291	4.1890	1.19857
Low financial motivator	291	3.6529	1.21761
The activities of cultism	291	3.6804	1.20527
Ethnicity	291	3.2852	1.18223
Lack of tolerance	291	3.3024	1.27494

*Source:* Field Survey, 2019

From the table 3 above, communication gap (mean= 4.1890; standard deviation= 1.19857); low financial motivator (mean= 3.6529; standard deviation= 1.21761); the activities of cultism (mean= 3.6804; standard deviation= 1.20527); ethnicity (mean= 3.2852; standard deviation 1.18223); and lack of tolerance (mean= 3.3024; standard deviation= 1.27494) are obviously the conflict factors in the marketing organizations. The mean score from the result shows that communication gap is the strongest conflict factor in the marketing organizations. The result of its standard deviation also shows more divergence. Although, other factors are also strong factors to be considered as strong conflict factors in the marketing organizations in Kogi State.

**Table 4a.** Regression analysis on Effective Conflict Management and performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.722 <sup>a</sup>	.521	.520	.51797

a. Predictors: (Constant), Effective Conflict Management

**Table 4b.** ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	84.409	1	84.409	314.616	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	77.536	289	.268		
	Total	161.945	290			

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Effective Conflict Management

**Table 4c.** Coefficients of Effective Conflict Management and performance of Marketing organizations

Model		Coefficients		T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error		
1	(Constant)	.490	.072	6.785	.000
	Effective Conflict Management	.734	.041	17.737	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

The Table 4a shows that 52.1% of the variation in the performance of marketing organizations, Kogi State is explained by Effective Conflict Management. The model shows Effective Conflict Management is a very strong predictor. The presence of 47.9% unexplained variation suggests that there are other predictor variables which affect variations in the performance of marketing organizations, Kogi State. The relative adjusted R-square of 52% shows that the model fits the data well. Based on the result, it is deduced that Effective Conflict Management has a significant effect on the performance of marketing organizations, Kogi State.

The ANOVA result on table 4b reports a significant *F* statistic ( $F= 314.616$ ;  $p= 0.01$ ), indicating that using the model is better than guessing the mean. The result also shows that the variation in the performance of the marketing organizations is highly significant.

The co-efficient ( $\beta= 0.884$ ;  $p= 0.01$ ) in table 4c shows a positive relationship between Effective Conflict Management and performance of marketing organizations. This states that changes in the observed behaviour of the independent variable (Effective Conflict Management) will proportionally cause changes in the performance of marketing organizations compared to other unexplained factors. The highly significant t-statistics value of 6.785 with p-value of 0.01 in Table 4c confirms that the Adjusted R-square (as in Table 4a) did not occur by chance. Therefore, the model is a good one. The variable Effective Conflict Management entered the model with positive signs. We therefore deduce that there is a positive relationship between Effective Conflict Management and performance of marketing organizations. This implies that when Conflict Management at the marketing organizations becomes more effective, there is often responsive improvement in the performance of the organizations.

**Table 5.** Regression Result on conflict factors and market share

Variables	Est. Coefficients	Standard Error	P> z
X <sub>1</sub> Communication gap	-.365	.176	.038*
X <sub>2</sub> Low financial motivator	-.384	.180	.033*
X <sub>3</sub> The activities of cultism	.128	.125	.306
X <sub>4</sub> Ethnicity	-.127	.128	.319
X <sub>5</sub> Lack of tolerance among employees	-.349	.175	.046*

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Number of Obs	=	291
PR chi <sup>2</sup>	=	80.405 **
Prob > chi <sup>2</sup>	=	0.000
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	=	0.241

Note: 5% significance (\*); 1% significance (\*\*).

From the result of the Ordered Probit Regression on table 5, the coefficient of determination (PR) of 80.405 and adjusted (Pr) 0.000 which implies that 100% of the changes experienced in market share was explained by the conflict factors in the model and the Pr ratio of 80.405 was significant at 1%. It could be observed on the table that communication gap (coefficient= -0.365; p< 0.05), low financial motivator (coefficient= -0.384; p< 0.05), ethnicity (coefficient= -0.127; p> 0.05) and lack of tolerance among employees (coefficient= -0.349; p= 0.05) were negatively related, which implies that a unit increase in the conflict factors could lead to probability decrease in the market share of marketing organizations. The activities of cultism (coefficient= .128; p> 0.05) positively related with market share of marketing organizations. Communication gap, low financial motivator and lack of tolerance among employees have significantly negative effects on market share of marketing organizations.

## Discussion of Findings

Finding shows that more than average of the variation in performance of marketing organizations is predicted by the Effective Conflict Management of the organizations. The result shows that Effective Conflict Management has a significant effect on the performance of marketing organizations in Kogi State. This agrees with the findings of Hotepo *et al.* (2010) and Obasan (2011) that found that conflict when managed effectively has a significant effect on the performance of any organization. It is further found that there is a significant positive relationship between Effective Conflict Management and performance of marketing organizations. The simple implication of this is that Conflict Management at the marketing organizations coresponsively correlates with the performance of the organizations. The study conducted by Uchendu *et al.* (2013) supports this finding that a significant relationship between conflict management and organizational performance. In similar vein, the finding of Mukolwe *et al.* (2014) stated that conflict significantly relates organizational performance. Also, Ajike *et al.* (2015) found that a significant positive relationship exists between conflict management and organizational performance.

Finding of this present study shows that the market hare of marketing organizations is possibly predicted by conflict variables (communication gap, low financial motivator, activities of cultism, ethnicity, and lack of tolerance among employees). In addition, finding further reveals that communication gap, low financial motivator and lack of tolerance among employees significantly have negative relationship with the market share of marketing organizations. Increasing activities of cultism have insignificant

positive relationship with the market share of marketing organizations. Ethnicity and the activities of cultism insignificantly relates with the market share of the marketing organizations.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The management of conflict in the marketing organizations is evidently effective. This may be as a result of the proactive approach that is often adopted, which is believed to have been instrumental to the constructive nature of conflict in the organizations. Effective Conflict Management is connected with the performance of marketing organizations in Kogi State. Better performance in the marketing organizations would not have been achieved without the effective management of conflict.

Communication gap, low financial motivator and lack of tolerance among employees are seen to have significant effect on the market share of marketing organizations in Kogi State. This means that negligence on these factors can cost the marketing organizations heavily. In a situation where the management of the marketing organizations relaxes a bit, the market share will suffer a backdrop. Based on the findings of the study, the management of the marketing organizations should sustain its effective conflict management approach or find more cost-benefit approach (such as long term oriented approach like Strategic Conflict Management approach) to managing conflict to improve the performance of the marketing organizations in Kogi State. The marketing organizations should concentrate more on addressing communication gap, low financial motivator and lack of tolerance among employees to enhance the market share of the marketing organizations in Kogi State.

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## APPENDIX

Krejcie Aad Morgan's (1970) Table for Sample Size

Population Size	Confidence = 95%				Confidence = 99%			
	Margin of Error				Margin of Error			
	5.0%	3.5%	2.5%	1.0%	5.0%	3.5%	2.5%	1.0%
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
20	19	20	20	20	19	20	20	20
30	28	29	29	30	29	29	30	30
50	44	47	48	50	47	48	49	50
75	63	69	72	74	67	71	73	75
100	80	89	94	99	87	93	96	99
150	108	126	137	148	122	135	142	149
200	132	160	177	196	154	174	186	198
250	152	190	215	244	182	211	229	246
300	169	217	251	291	207	246	270	295
400	196	265	318	384	250	309	348	391
500	217	306	377	475	285	365	421	485
600	234	340	432	565	315	416	490	579
700	248	370	481	653	341	462	554	672
800	260	396	526	739	363	503	615	763
1000	278	440	606	906	399	575	727	943
1200	291	474	674	1067	427	636	827	1119
1500	306	515	759	1297	460	712	959	1376
2000	322	563	869	1655	498	808	1141	1785
2500	333	597	952	1984	524	879	1288	2173
3500	346	641	1068	2565	558	977	1510	2890
5000	357	678	1176	3288	586	1066	1734	3842
7500	365	710	1275	4211	610	1147	1960	5165
10000	370	727	1332	4899	622	1193	2098	6239
25000	378	760	1448	6939	646	1285	2399	9972
50000	381	772	1491	8056	655	1318	2520	12455
75000	382	776	1506	8514	658	1330	2563	13583
100000	383	778	1513	8762	659	1336	2585	14227
250000	384	782	1527	9248	662	1347	2626	15555
500000	384	783	1532	9423	663	1350	2640	16055
1000000	384	783	1534	9512	663	1352	2647	16317
2500000	384	784	1536	9567	663	1353	2651	16478
10000000	384	784	1536	9594	663	1354	2653	16560
100000000	384	784	1537	9603	663	1354	2654	16584
300000000	384	784	1537	9603	663	1354	2654	16586