Information exchange and collaborative problem-solving roles in organizational conflict resolution

Kolawole Johnson Bodunde[1], Sunday Ade Bello[2], Lanre Olasunkanmi[3]

1. *Department of Business Management, Northwest International University, Armenia*
2. *School of Business Management, Entrepreneurship and Leadership, Northwest International University, Armenia*
3. *The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria, Nigeria*

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corresponding authors:
most.habiba@gmail.com

Abstract

It has been established that conflict is inevitable in organisations given the composite nature of the work environment. This study on Information Exchange and Collaborative Problem-Solving Roles in Organizational Conflict Resolution specifically reviewed the import of the exchange of information and collaborative problem-solving in the conflict resolution process. The study employed the use of a structured questionnaire administered through Google form to 180 respondents involving Executives, Management, Union leaders, and other rank officers from Banking & Fintech, Professional Institutes, Manufacturing, MDAs, Telecom, Oil & Gas sectors from southwest Nigeria using a stratified random sampling technique. Two research questions and two hypotheses were raised to guide the study. The two hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance using the T. test table. Data were analysed using charts, tabulations, percentages, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient (PPMC) methods. The outcome of the hypotheses confirmed that there were significant relationships among the exchange of information, collaborative problem-solving, and conflict resolution in the organisation. Essentially the purpose of conflict resolution in the organization is to enhance collaboration, and consensus building, promote inclusiveness of all social partners, and intervene in matters that could instigate conflict. The exchange of information and collaborative problem-solving proved to be potent instruments for promoting effective conflict resolutions. It is therefore recommended that organizations should adopt the use of these forms of social dialogue in resolving conflicts.

Keywords: Collaborative Problem-Solving, Conflict resolution, Exchange of Information, Organisations Conflict

***JEL Classification Codes*:** K31, J500, J510, J520

1.0 Introduction

Conflict in organisations has been established to be inevitable considering the composite nature of the work environment. The work environment is exposed to people with varied backgrounds, ideologies, values, views, desires, and interests. Management desires to increase productivity and efficiency and sometimes initiate new rules and policies. Often change attracts resistance and contradiction especially if it is connected to, employment matters, new policies, and procedural changes in the organization. In most cases, employees through their unions would always push for better conditions of service, wages increase amid limited resources, protect the employment of its members, and agitate for their promotion and advancement in the organizations. The desires of the employers and employees at times may be seen to compete and at loggerhead, consequently, may degenerate into conflict.

When conflict evolves and has escalated to the point of disrupting the organisational environment, the process of finding the source and providing a decisive and enduring solution to eliminate the causal issues is referred to as conflict resolution. Conflict resolution and conflict management are two methods of addressing conflicts, but these two symbiotic concepts are often used interchangeably, and they have discrete differences in terms of their aims, approaches, and outcomes. While conflict resolution entails providing an absolute and permanent solution to a conflict, to address and exterminate the underlying issues instigating the conflict, conflict management on the other hand encompasses handling, monitoring, and protecting conflicts to curtail their damaging effects and exploit their constructive outcomes. Essentially, conflict management's aim is not necessarily to eradicate conflict but to manage it creatively and efficiently.

Scannell (2010) asserted that conflict is an expected and typical feature that happens in every organization and is avoidable, preventable, and necessary. And for any group that endeavours to accomplish its goals, conflict is unavoidable. Even if differences occur, the consequence does not necessarily have to be negative. Conflict can offer opportunities. Conflict instigates thinking outside the box, being more inventive, advancing greater understanding, and searching for alternate measures that are more resourceful, effective, and productive. Muindi, et al (2017) described conflict as a condition where there is a disagreement between social partners. It annotates a tense, unhappy, stressful, discouraging, and frustrating situation. To manage or resolve conflict requires the deployment of social dialogue strategies which encompasses collective bargaining, exchange of information, negotiation, consultation, and collaborative problem-solving and decision-making. Islam and Karim (2017) that when interests evolve and intertwine with organizational goals, group dynamics and loyalties, demands on inadequate resources, etc, there is the likelihood that conflict may ensue. Bodunde and Bello (2024) stated that the new nature of the workplace is evolving and undergoing substantial transformations because of globalization, technological advancements, the presence of multi-generational cohorts, and shifting demographic patterns which have led to increased diversity, remote work arrangements, and a more interconnected global workforce. These

changes have given rise to new challenges in communication, collaboration, demands, and conflict management within organizations.

Edime (2022) inferred that, conflicts whether stemming from interpersonal differences, operational, bias, demands, or gender issues, disagreement between unions and management is inevitable in any workplace. The capacity to manage conflicts constructively is vital for preserving a productive work environment, avoiding productivity loss, and nurturing a culture of unceasing improvement. Adekola and Ajadi (2021), asserted that the process of arriving at a compromise while attempting to resolve grievances in most cases involves argument and contradictions of opinions and views, which often degenerate into an industrial conflict if the process is not appropriately managed, it can lead to disruptions of work process and eventually endanger the corporate success of an organization, most especially when it involves the union and its members. Okuthe (2022), said that the increasingly important function of social dialogue in conflict management is supported by management's and organizations' desire for conflict resolution. Although social discourse is seen as being important in resolving conflicts, there is a need for a profound understanding of the dynamics within definite organizational frameworks. Fisher (2023) opined that existing research has not sufficiently captured the nuances of social dialogue processes in all-inclusiveness, as in most cases collective bargaining has been used in the place of social dialogue, thus, a focused study becomes essential to elucidate the roles of each of the elements of social dialogue.

Since conflicts are natural and integral phenomena of any organization, it is pertinent and desirable to establish a process that will curtail the outspread of conflict or initiate a resolution process whenever conflict occurs. The consequence of unresolved conflict is not palatable as it stampedes harmonious, cordial, and steady employee-employer relationships. It is therefore expedient that the organisation should initiate procedures for conflict resolution as it is germane to the productivity, profitability, and industrial harmony of the organisation.

1.1 Statement of problem

Fisher (2023) affirmed that collective bargaining has been used in the place of social dialogue, whereas in most cases, extant research has not sufficiently captured the nuances of the processes of the concept in all its inclusiveness. International Labour Organisation (2018) described social dialogue to ‘cover all forms of negotiation, consultation, and exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers, and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy’. Collective bargaining, negotiation, and policy dialogue are the three dominant concepts mentioned in most of the literature reviewed. Thus, collective bargaining has been one of the most widespread forms of social dialogue mentioned to have been institutionalized in many organisations and countries. Auer (2001) asserted that social dialogue is different from collective bargaining but provides an avenue for more resourceful negotiating. Given the fact that the exchange of information and collaborative problem-solving as forms of social has not been prominently discussed in literature like collective bargaining, this study examined

Information Exchange and Collaborative Problem-Solving Roles in Organizational Conflict Resolution.

1.2. Research questions

The study answers the following research questions:

i. how does the exchange of information impact conflict resolution in an organisation?

ii. what role does collaborative problem-solving play in conflict resolution in an organisation?

1.3. Objectives of the study

The exchange of information and collaborative problem-solving in the conflict resolution process in organisations entails an understanding of the dynamics of communication, collaboration, and resolution within organisational structures regardless of the actors. The objective of this study is to appraise the roles and relevance of the exchange of information and collaborative problem-solving in the conflict resolution process in an organisation. Therefore, the study examined:

i. the impact of the exchange of information in conflict resolution in an organisation.

ii. the role of collaborative problem-solving in conflict resolution in an organisation.

1.4 Research hypothesis

The hypotheses formulated for this study were as follows:

$H0^1$ Exchange of information does not have any significant role in conflict resolution in an organisation.

$H0^2$ There is no significant relationship between collaborative problem-solving and conflict resolution in an organisation.

2.0 Literature review

2.1. Conflict

International Labour Organization (ILO) describes conflict as a disagreement between two or more parties and where the disputing parties are labour and management, it is referred to as an industrial conflict or a labour dispute. Trade Dispute Act 1990 referred to conflict as a form of disagreement between employers and employees or amongst employees that is related to employment or non-employment and terms of engagement of any persons.

Rahim (2023), stated that conflicts arise when interests collide usually because of divergence in organizational goals, personal ambition, group loyalties, demands on scarce resources, and so forth. Therefore, conflicts originate from a multitude of sources found at personal and organizational levels in institutions. In a related view, Scannell (2020) averred that conflict arises from a clash of perceptions, goals, or values in a domain where people care about the outcome and that the seeds of

conflict may be sown in a misperception about, or discontent with, the mutual purpose and how to accomplish it.

Furthermore, Scannel (2020) stated that pursuing common goals may interfere with achieving individual goals within the organization. Fajana (2012) asserted that conflict in work relations is a phenomenon and an essential part of social reality in an organization that is a predictable characteristic of human interactions, which can either be a substance for positive change or a source of interruption. The way conflicts are identified, addressed, and resolved significantly stimulates organizational culture, employee engagement, and inclusive performance. Herrity (2024) stated that conflicts can be seen as brawls that can ensue as a result of discontentment arising from differing opinions or interests. It is therefore expedient to know how to maneuver and consummate resolution. Adeyemi (2010) stated that the concept of conflict in organizational systems is in three dimensions i.e., intra-personal conflict which happens within individual workers in an organization; inter-personal conflict which occurs between individuals which may be two or more; and intra-group conflict which usually happens amongst individuals within a given group, department, unit, etc.

2.1.1. Conflict resolution

This is a response to bringing enduring solutions to conflicts and it requires strategies. Sometimes an external or neutral person can take the driver's seat to provide the solution to a conflict and in some cases, parties to the conflict may take an outside viewpoint to find a solution through collaboration. Kamrul and Rezaul (2017) conceptualized conflict resolution as a process of being able to identify the root cause of conflict and reasonably and efficiently resolve the impasse. Furthermore, Kamrul and Rezaul (2017) stated that the purpose of conflict resolution is to improve learning and group outcomes, including effectiveness in an organizational setting. Herrity (2024) opined that conflict can be resolved using the most common strategies which are, avoiding, competing, accommodating, collaborating, and compromising. Avoiding means ignoring that there could be a conflict. However, there was a dissenting view that though ignoring may appear to be a lofty idea, when it involves people's problems, ignoring them may not be an appropriate step to take as such a decision can produce feelings of bullying, forgotten, inconsequential, and resentfulness from the employees. A competing strategy rarely brings the solution to a conflict because it does not allow collaborative problem-solving. It is a win-lose approach. Accommodating entails one party providing for the other party what will be required to bring resolution to the underlying problem. Collaborating entails working with other parties to find a mutually beneficial solution to a problem. It is a win-win approach. Compromising like collaborating seeks a joint consensus way of settling a conflict.

There are certain assumptions underpinning most approaches to conflict resolution which include: conflict resolution as a collaborative effort; the results pursued are integrative ones; the substance is an understanding of the interests of all parties; and both the process and product are peaceable.

According to Aghedo (2015), conflict resolution encompasses a series of stages aimed at addressing and resolving conflicts beneficially. The stages may differ to some extent depending on the model or

approach used and can take place in three phases viz: Pre-conflict; Conflict situation; and post-conflict. The pre-conflict stage is commonly initiated by the intermediary who anticipate resolving the disputes before they degenerate into unmanageable conflict. Efforts are made by the mediator at the conflict stage to instigate peace and end any hostility between parties to the conflict. Post-conflict stage presents **a** mediator to ensure sustainable peace after the initial conflict has ended and peace brokered to avoid a re-occurrence. Okuthe (2022) stated that conflict resolution provides various benefits like building strong relationships among social partners and facilitating healthier collaboration, instigating peace, boosting morale and preventing disruptions of organization's processes, enabling conflicting parties to be more productive in achieving organization's goals, lessening stress levels of social partners, provides an avenue for parties to understand different perspective to issues, and enable retention of employees, etc.

2.1.2 Exchange of information

ILO (2018) defined social conversation as encompassing all types of information sharing, negotiation, and consulting amongst social partners inside an institution. Guo, et al (2023), stated that irrespective of the conflict management technique adopted, sharing information is significant to resolving conflict in an organization. Negotiation encompasses different segments, especially when matters in contention are complex. The first step may entail building trust, discovering the parties' concerns, and broadening the context of the issue. This may lead to the distributive stage of negotiation which would involve the exchange of information like offers counteroffers and purposes. The information exchanged or made available by the parties whether disclosed or retained could significantly determine the outcome of negotiation. The distributive stage of negotiation is about the exchange of related information and facts, together with the qualities and strengths (moral, legal, or otherwise) of each party's case which must be devoid of ambiguity. The exchange of information is also required during the consolidative phase of negotiation. Information about preferences, principles, primacies, needs, and worries may be shared to inspire trust and mutuality. The kinds of information divulged would consequently enable the process.

International Labour Office (2012), itemized negotiation, consultation, exchange of information, and collective bargaining as elements of social dialogue. Consultation requires social partners' parties' engagement by exchanging views, ideas, thoughts, and dispositions that can foster in-depth dialogue. It is that process whereby social partners share valuable information among themselves. While some social partners are enabled to make agreements that are legally binding on the parties, others may limit their exchange of ideas and opinions to informational consultations. As a result, information sharing seemed to be the most essential and basic component of social discourse. Although it suggests no actual debate or action on the topics, it is an essential step in the procedures that allow for discussion and decision-making.

2.1.3. Collaborative problem-solving

Herrity (2024) stated that collaborating entails working with other parties to find a mutually beneficial solution to a problem. It is a win-win approach. Conflict resolution in organizations can involve varied approaches among which are collaboration, compromise, accommodating, competing, and avoidance. A collaborative approach in conflict resolution has been adjudged to be most suitable as a result of its capacity to establish satisfactory long-term results. Muigua (2024), described collaborative problem-solving as an effective process of restoring peace and claimed that the approach has been adjudged to be a better way to conflict resolution. Collaborative problem-solving inspires liberty for the parties to express their thoughts and fears verbally, and this promotes a feeling of being valued and conscious of their partners' concerns. The approach is seen to be a prevailing method of conflict resolution that hinges on collaboration and open communication. Sufficient evidence has shown that amid conflict resolution approaches, the collaborative approach is best suited to catalog the basis of a conflict, identify causal desires of the conflictual groups, and bring a resolution that will be beneficial to all partners.

Furthermore, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2024) viewed collaborative conflict management as a process of adopting extensive informal methods where contending parties collaborate and agree to resolve a controversial issue. May (2024) inferred that collaboration provides an avenue for conflictual partners to liaise with themselves and willingly discuss issues in the contest by listening to each other and making an effort to provide mutually acceptable solutions that will be beneficial for the parties.

Muindi, et al (2017) stated that the collaborative problem-solving style perceives conflicts as challenges to be resolved by initiating creative solutions that are satisfactory to the parties involved. Literature reviewed showed that collaborative problem-solving has been assumed to be a great tool for addressing potential or extant conflict. The style separates personalities from the issue and encourages open dialogue among the parties in conflict. Also inferred that through the collaborative problem-solving process, contending parties can produce a ''win-win'' solution and relationships are protected. The approach enables the conflicting parties to listen actively and intentionally during the expression of their views. The process allows parties to clarify the underlying issue through questions to detect and clarify each side's underlying concerns, engage in brainstorming solutions to generate a list of all likely solutions to the issues so identified, and reach an agreement on the best solution(s). The disposition of conflicting parties to work together to proffer solutions to the issues in contest is a collaboration that can be reframed as collaborative problem-solving. Parties involved must treat one another with mutual respect and great importance. This may require a change of engrossed assumptions that stimulate how parties comprehend the issue and then take collective decisive action.

2.2. Theoretical review

The theory of conflict can be said to have three assumptions firstly, humans are self-absorbed; secondly, there is always perpetual resource scarcity; and thirdly conflict is unescapable and

inevitable within and between social groups. This study therefore anchored on some related theories based on the assumptions. Firstly, pluralistic theory credited to Fox (1966) recognizes that an organization is made up of groups with differing interests, objectives, and values which may coincide or be in conflict with rival groups, and Kerr (1964) perceived conflict as inevitable so far, the objectives of labour and management are relatively different and characteristically are at friction with each other. Secondly, the traditional theory of Simmel (1908) stated that conflicts could serve to reinforce group relationships and improve social harmony and regarded conflict as a usual and essential part of social partners' lives that could lead to social transformation and integration. Thirdly, contemporary theory recognizes that conflicts between human beings are unavoidable and that they emerge as a natural result of change and can be beneficial to the organization if managed efficiently. The contingency perspective of the contemporary theory holds the view that employment/industrial relations as well as human resources management is influenced by the organization's environment and circumstances. These theories are related and linked to this study from the point that organizations are made up of diverse people of different ideologies, backgrounds, and views. Also, that conflict is an unavoidable phenomenon in organisations, and labour and management would always be at loggerheads over objectives, and that conflict can be beneficial in most cases if creatively managed.

2.3. Empirical reviews

Muigua (2024) carried out a study to examine the relevance of collaborative approaches in conflict management. The study showed that conflict management encompasses engaging several methods which include collaboration, compromise, competition, accommodating, and avoidance. The researcher avowed that conflicts in any given society can produce an undesirable consequence capable of truncating peace, sustainability, and development of an organization, hence, prompt, and effective management of conflict is desirable to foster industrial harmony and organizational development. The study further revealed that collaborative styles in conflict management had been acclaimed to be the best on account of their capability to foster acceptable enduring outcomes when conflicts are resolved. The study averred that collaborative techniques are the prevailing style for resolving conflict in an organization because they hinge on mutuality, open communication, and finding win-win results. The researcher inferred that these methods have been linked with some challenges like delays due to difficulties in building consensus and collaboration in conflict situations. The study recommended that the management of organizations should embrace collaborative problem-solving, develop required skills like active and empathetic listening, encourage social partners to concentrate on collective interests instead of individual positions, enable robust collaboration, and encourage parties to seek assistance from third parties such as mediators in the event where collaborative methods failed.

Guo, et al (2023) carried out a study on the interdependence and information exchange between conflicting parties to determine the relevance of the exchange of information in conflict resolution

between organizations. The study concluded that it is difficult to avoid conflict in inter-organizational relationships, and information exchange is critical for resolving conflict. The study further reported that information exchange, trust, and interdependence aid experts in addressing conflict. The researcher opined that regardless of the conflict management method adopted, sharing information is critical in resolving conflict and can improve inter-organizational coordination.

Okuthe (2022) conducted a study to examine the importance and effectiveness of dialogue in organisational conflict resolution. Findings showed that dialogue is a viable tool for conflict resolution and forms the basis of peacebuilding and human reconciliation efforts. The study also complemented other findings that conflicts are an unavoidable aspect of working teams and human life and cannot be avoided. The study avowed that learning to resolve conflicts through dialogue is an important part of a high-performance team as through dialogue, participants promise to listen, reflect, and ask questions with a curious mindset to seek a common understanding. Researchers opined that dialogue opens a social space and resolving a dispute ends the dispute by satisfying the interests of both parties and always seeking a solution based on mutual interests.

Amaeshi et al. (2021) carried out a study to identify the effect of conflict on organizational performance in 50 selected manufacturing sub-sectors in the southeastern States of Nigeria, using a descriptive survey research design. The study showed that there is a significant positive contribution of conflict management strategies to organizational performance. The study concluded that power, style, culture, and goal play a significant role in managing organizational conflicts. Based on the findings, the study recommended that the management of the organisations should create additional channels of communication with employees as means of obtaining prompt feedback on organizational policies so that conflicting interests will not arise.

Osakede et. al (2018) examined how conflicts are resolved at some universities in southwest Nigeria by adopting an in-depth interview technique. The study showed that arbitrary deduction of salaries, poor condition of service, communication gap between management and staff, and deplorable work environment were some major causes of industrial conflict in the university. However, conflicts are resolved through a social dialogue process which includes collaboration, exchange of information, collective bargaining, and a committee system. The study inferred that dialogue had promoted democratic style and prevented authoritarian leadership in the institution thereby limiting the incidence of conflict. The researchers concluded industrial conflict can be effectively managed without resulting in strike action when social dialogue is employed.

Muindi (2017) studied to explore the effect of collaboration as a conflict management method on academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni County. The study deployed the use of questionnaires administered to 18 principals and 54 teachers in the schools to gather information on the influence of collaboration as a form of social dialogue in conflict management in academic performance. Findings revealed that a substantial number of the principals improved their conflict

management approach by collaborating with others to enhance the performance of their schools since collaboration pointedly influences students' performance in secondary schools.

Osabiya (2015) carried out an appraisal of the best practices in conflict resolution in an organisation and ways of enhancing the organization's working life through improved employment relations. The research was conducted to look for a different approach to dispute resolution beyond the conventional punishment and grievance procedures. The Researcher evaluated the challenges and opportunities associated with incorporating mediation into the procedures and ethos of an establishment. Data was gathered from 170 Nigeria Public Service personnel. Findings showed that poor leadership styles can instigate conflict in an organization, notwithstanding, that employees and management can resolve conflict through compromise. The study recommended that employees should be engaged more in the decision-making process to reduce the incidences of conflict. Also, an effective communication network among all the stakeholders is essential.

3.0 Methodology

This study adopted a self-designed questionnaire administered through Google form to 180 respondents involving Executives, Management, Union leaders, and other rank officers from Banking & Fintech, Professional Institutes, Manufacturing, Oil & Gas, and Telcos sectors from southwest Nigeria using a stratified random sampling technique. The sample selected was based on the status and years of experience in their respective organisations. The sample method was premised on the fact that respondents find it easier and more convenient to respond to e-mails, SMS, chats, and online forms than the hard copy forms.

4.0 Data analysis, interpretation, and discussion of findings

4.1 Data analysis, interpretation

Table 1: Distributions of designations/status of the respondents

Junior staff	Senior staff	Management staff	Executives
25 (16.4%)	31 (20.4%)	53 (34.9%)	43 (28.3%)

Table 2: Sectors' distributions of the respondents

Banking & Fintech	Manufacturing	Professional Institutes	MDAs	Telcos	Oil & Gas	Others
24 (15.8%)	19 (12.5%)	53 (34.9%)	13 (8.6%)	12 (7.9%)	13 (8.6%)	22 (14.5%)

Consent of the respondents was obtained before administering the questionnaire. The privacy and confidentiality of respondents' views were safeguarded. The autonomy and dignity of respondents throughout the research process were respected, ensuring that their perspectives were valued and represented accurately. The report of findings is transparent and accurate, acknowledging any limitations or biases in research methods and ensuring the integrity and credibility of the study.

Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistical methods i.e., charts, tabulations, and percentages. Also, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient (PPMC) was adopted to determine how collaborative problem-solving and exchange of information related to conflict resolution. Data was collected through a Google form questionnaire administered to 180 respondents out of which 152 responded. The two hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance using the T. test table.

Results

Table 3: Respondents' response to questionnaire

SA-Strongly Agreed A-Agreed SD-Strongly Disagreed D- Disagreed

Items	**SA**	**A**	**SD**	**D**	**Total**	**% SA**	**% A**	**% SD**	**% D**	**Total %**
The exchange of information has a significant role in conflict resolution in an organisation	66	64	19	03	**152**	43.43	42.11	12.5	1.98	**100**
There is a significant relationship between collaborative problem-solving and conflict resolution in organisation	67	63	08	14	**152**	44.08	41.48	5.26	9.21	**100**

Source: Google survey form 2024

The table above shows that an average of 85.52% of respondents agreed in both strong and mild terms that the two forms of social dialogue are relevant and have relationships with conflict resolution in an organisation while 14.48% on average of respondents disagreed in both mild and strong terms.

Test of Hypotheses

H0[1]: Exchange of information does not have any significant role in conflict resolution in the organisation

Table 4: Exchange of Information and Conflict Resolution

Items	*Mean*	*SD*	*N*	*r*	*P*	*Remark*	*Decision*
Exchange of Information	3.24	0.830					
			152	0.434	0.001	Sig.	Ho1
	16.14	2.630					rejected
Conflict Management							

p<0.05

Table 4 presents the test of the significant role of the exchange of information in conflict management in the organisation. The result depicts a moderate positive relationship between the exchange of information and conflict management in the workplace, which is significant at 0.05 level of significance (r (152) = 0.434; p = 0.001). The hypothesis that stated that the exchange of information does not have a significant role in conflict management in the organisation was rejected. This, therefore, implies that the exchange of information has a significant role in conflict resolution in the organisation.

H0^2: There is no significant relationship between collaborative problem-solving and conflict resolution in the organisation.

Table 5: Collaborative Problem-Solving and Conflict Resolution

Items	*Mean*	*SD*	*N*	*r*	*P*	*Remark*	*Decision*
Collaborative Problem-Solving	3.34	0.763					
			152	0.439	0.001	Sig.	Ho_2
	16.14	2.630					rejected
Conflict resolution							

p<0.05

Table 5 presents the test of the relationship between collaborative problem-solving and conflict resolution in organisations using PPMC. It showed a moderate positive relationship between collaborative problem-solving and conflict resolution in organisation which is significant at 0.05 level of significance (r (152) = 0.439; p = 0.001). The hypothesis that stated that there is no significant relationship between collaborative problem-solving and conflict resolution in an organisation was rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between collaborative problem-solving and conflict resolution in an organisation.

4.2 Discussion of findings

The objective of this study was to appraise roles and relationships of exchange of information and collaborative problem-solving in conflict resolution in an organisation. The responses of the respondents were analysed, and the result of the findings showed that the exchange of information and collaborative problem-solving have relationships with conflict resolution and that they play vital roles. These findings are in harmony with the prior studies and concurred with the findings of Edime, (2022) assertions that stressing the benefits and importance of exchange of information and negation in conflict resolution is crucial. And Bojer, Roehl, et al (2021) inferred that collaborative decision-making & collaborative problem-solving are basic and potent characteristics of social dialogue. The study further revealed that effective conflict resolution in organisation trims down the conflict, creates room for a joint determination of conflict, facilitates partnership and collaborative problem-solving and decision-making attitude, replaces adversarial relationships with collaborative partnerships leading to harmonious co-existence among social partners, and opens and encourages channel for consensus building. This agrees with the view of Okuthe, (2022) on the benefits of social dialogue in conflict resolution.

Findings also depicted that collaboration in conflict resolution;

i. promotes–the involvement of varied interested social partners to reach a consensus on a contentious issue.
ii. prompts the adoption of an attitude skewed towards collaboration rather than individualistic benefits.
iii. initiates new communication and decision-making procedures on vital issues.
iv. encourages partnerships while solidifying social partners' networks, and
v. preserves relationships, building trust, and promoting long-term positive change amongst the social partners.

5. Conclusions

The study confirmed that conflict in the workplace is an intrinsic feature of employees' and employers' relations. To sustain a tidy relationship in an organization will require a deliberate commitment to the adoption of conflict resolution procedures and strategies. The essential purpose of conflict resolution in an organization is to dig deep into the root cause of conflict and find enduring solutions to issues, enhance collaboration and consensus building, and promote inclusiveness of all social partners among others. Social dialogue proved to be a potent apparatus for promoting effective conflict resolutions and exchange of information and collaborative problem-solving has proven to be a sine qua non for resourceful and beneficial negotiation outcomes.

6. Recommendations

Effectual joint problem-solving and exchange of information amongst the social partners in an organization are critical components in resolving conflict in the work environment. Apart from fostering collective understanding, they also foster a basis for finding mutually satisfactory solutions to issues in conflict. Thus, the significance of the exchange of information and collaborative problem-solving in organizational conflict resolution should be seen as indispensable. Therefore, parties in conflict should:

i. endeavour to establish and embrace open communication channels whereby all social partners will exchange all required information with openness during the conflict management process.

ii. establish a guiding rule for engagement whereby varying views will be respected without any personal confrontation.

iii. clearly distinguish issue in contention and concentrate on main interests and needs of the parties instead of unyielding positions or requests.

iv. engage in brainstorming and collectively appraise the pros and cons of issues in contention and develop a wide range of probable solutions. This will encourage creativity and an unabated flow of ideas.

v. build trust, mutual respect, and confidence in themselves. Initiate process to follow-up on agreement and constant communication to tackle any concerns that may evolve subsequently after agreement.

vi. adopt collective ownership of agreement of solutions reached, which will invariably encourage teamwork.

7. Suggestions for further studies

Conflict resolution and conflict management are two methods of tackling conflicts. However, these two words had been interchangeably used in most cases despite their distinctness in terms of goals, methods, and outcomes. Further studies can be carried out to evaluate the impact of consultation as a form of social dialogue in conflict resolution.

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