CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN ORGANIZATION: TRENDS AND ISSUES AT THE NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF LEATHER AND SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY, ZARIA, NIGERIA.

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Abstract
Organizations are living systems consisting of interacting units performing a task in a mutually dependent manner within a structure of scarce resources. It seems commonplace to suggest that conflicts would be present in such a setting. The parties in an organization may have a conflict about the distribution of resources, or they may have a more fundamental conflict about the very structure of their organization and the basic nature of their interaction. Once the parties are in a situation of goal incompatibility, their conflict develops in a dynamic fashion, initiating valuable and much-needed constructive changes or leading to escalating strategies and destructive consequences. Depending upon how those conflicts are handled, they can lead to discord or to a more positive workplace. The idea of conflict management is to accept the fact that conflicts will naturally arise and that it is possible to deal with them in a way that ultimately strengthens the organization.

Keywords: *Conflict, management, organization*

Background to the Study
Conflict can be defined as a situation in which two or more parties have incompatible objectives and in which their perceptions and behavior are commensurate with that incompatability.[4]This definition is purposely broad. It suggests that conflict is a social phenomenon that is found in personal, group or organizational interactions. As such it comprises several dimensions. Fink[5] distinguishes between (1) antagonistic-psychological relations and (2) antagonistic behavior, whereas, Pondy observes that conflict is made up of (1) antecedent conditions, (2) affective conditions, (3) cognitive conditions and (4) behavioral conditions.

Conflict refers to more than just overt behavior. Concentrating only upon its behavioral manifestation is an extremely limiting exercise. The three-dimensional conception of

conflict emphasizes the need to consider the situation in which parties (individuals, groups or organizations) come to possess incompatible goals, their structure of interaction and the nature of their goals. We have to consider emotional (e.g. distrust) and cognitive (e.g. stereotyping) orientations that accompany a conflict situation as well as the range of action undertaken by any party in a situation of conflict. Administrators often feel that discussions of fundamental terms are merely academic. This is not always the case. Effective action and sensible responses depend upon clear thinking and systematic analysis. Understanding must precede action. If administrators consider the problem of conflict and understand that conflicts stem from ineradicable human qualities and are related to situations of interdependence, scarce resources and perceptions of incompatibility, they might readily accept conflict and recognize its values provided, that is, they are properly aware of "conflict management" and the need to find a solution. Both conflict management and a satisfactory solution are easier to attain when it is accepted that what we normally call conflict is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon. It is not caused by "inadequate" structures, nor is it undesirable. It is natural and inevitable and if properly managed, it is productive, relevant and creative.

Conflict management is not an end but means to end unresolved complaints. Therefore, the need arises to take a closer look at the subject matter in line with a typical scenario which the Nigerian Institute of Leather and Science Technology, Zaria had suffered for almost a decade.

Materials and Methods
Study Design: The descriptive research was used in this study which is concerned with the collection of data for the purpose of describing and interpreting existing conditions. This is necessary to make informed recommendations to tackle the causes and effects of conflict in an organization.

NILEST in Brief
The Nigeria Institute of Leather and Science Technology, Samaru Zaria was established in 1964 following the request of the then Northern Regional Government to Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resource. It was named Hides and Skin Demonstration and Training Project. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and United Nation were commissioned to commence a feasibility study on the development of the abundant raw hide and skin in the country.

In 1972, the UN submitted technical reports which among other things propose the upgrading of the centre to a Research Institute that will carter for the Leather, Leather Product and Allied Field. Before then, the name of the centre was Federal Leather Institute, Zaria and was offering in-service training for certificate, and Diploma in Hide and Skin Improvement Technology.

A year after, in 1973, the Institute was changed to Leather Research Institute of Nigeria by Decree no 35 of 1973 and was placed among the fourteen (research) Institute under the Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARCN). In 1988, the Institute evolved yet again by the expanded mandate and inclusion of Chemical Technology, which resulted in the change of name to National Research Institute for Chemical Technology (NARICT) with the head quarters at Basawa, Zaria.In November 199, the Samaru Centre attained Semi-autonomous status and was named Federal College of Leather Technology *FCLT) Samaru, Zaria. The name was subsequently changed to Federal College of Chemical and Leather Technology (CHELTECH) Samaru, Zaria in 1992.

Following the resolution at the National Science and Technology Summit at Minna in 2006, the research mandate on Leather in NARICT and all the extension centers (Sokoto, Kano, Maiduguri, and Jos) were officially transferred to CHELTECH on 26th June, 2009, thus reverting back the status of a research Institute.

However, on 1ˢᵗ April, 2011, the name of the College was changed to Nigeria Institute of Leather and Science Technology (NILEST) to properly position it in line with its mandate, mission and Vision.

However, Nigerian Institute of Leather and Science Technology Samaru, Zaria is the only tertiary Institution South of the Sahara that engages in manpower training for the leather and allied products sub-sector. It enjoys co-operation with similar institution abroad like the University of Northampton, the British School of Leather Technology in Great Britain, and other International bodies like UNDP AND UNIDO.

Mandate of NILEST
To provide course of instructions, training and research in the field of leather and leather product technology and Conduct Research and Development on Leather Technologies and goods Production.

Mission Statement of NILEST
i.   To provide globally competitive and environmentally friendly technologies for leather and leather products and allied industries
ii.   To acquire and maintain world-class technical capacity and reputation to offer Science based consultancy services in leather and leather products, production and marketing, quality control in related areas.
iii.   To produce technologists and technicians with sound understanding of necessary science for production of chemicals, polymers, leather and leather products and their technologies and to provide service support to the industrial sector.

Vision
i.   To become a research Institute of International Standard in the provision of innovative research and development in the processing and conversion of raw hides and skins into leather and leather products.
ii.   To be a renowned centre of excellence in the field of tannery and affluent monitoring and control, leather and leather products technologies.
iii.   To be a centre of excellence in he production of scientific models and polymer products.
(Source: NILEST in Brief)

NILEST Flagship Programmes
i.   Design and development of Leather, Leather goods and allied technologies
ii.   Development of Tannery/Leather waste management system for the Nigerian Leather and Allied Industries
iii.   Development of line treatment cycle for recycleable Leather and Polymeric materials.
iv.   Development and management of production lines for employment generation in the following:
        Hide and skin processing
        Leather processing
        Footwear and Leather Products Manufacture
v.   Upgrading capacity in skill acquisition, small and medium enterprises (SME) on Leather, Leather Products, Polymer and Science Technologies.

Nigerian Institute of Leather and Science Technology serves as an advisory body and a watchdog for government in the control and legislation as they affect the Nigerian leather industry.

NILEST Paradigm Shift
In order to provide courses of Instruction and Training leading to the awards of certificates, Diploma, ND and HND, which forms Part of the Core mandate of NILEST, the following training programmes were fully accredited by the National Board for Technical Education

i.   HND and ND in Leather Technology

ii.   Footwear Manufacture (DFT, DFM, and OFM)

iii.   Diploma in Production and Environmental Technology

iv.   HND SLT (Chemistry, Biochemistry and Microbiology Options) and ND SLT

v.   HND and ND Polymer Technology

vi.   Diploma in Industrial Chemical Processing Technology

vii.   Certificate in Hides and Skins Improvement Technology

viii.   Short-term Training Programmes in Leather and Polymer related Technology

Training Facilities
The Institute recognizes the need for functional Instructional materials that makes teaching practically oriented. The institute has laboratories for basic Sciences, Polymer Technology and Leather Analysis. The Institute's mechanized tannery is equipped for the processing of raw Hides and skins to finished Leather.
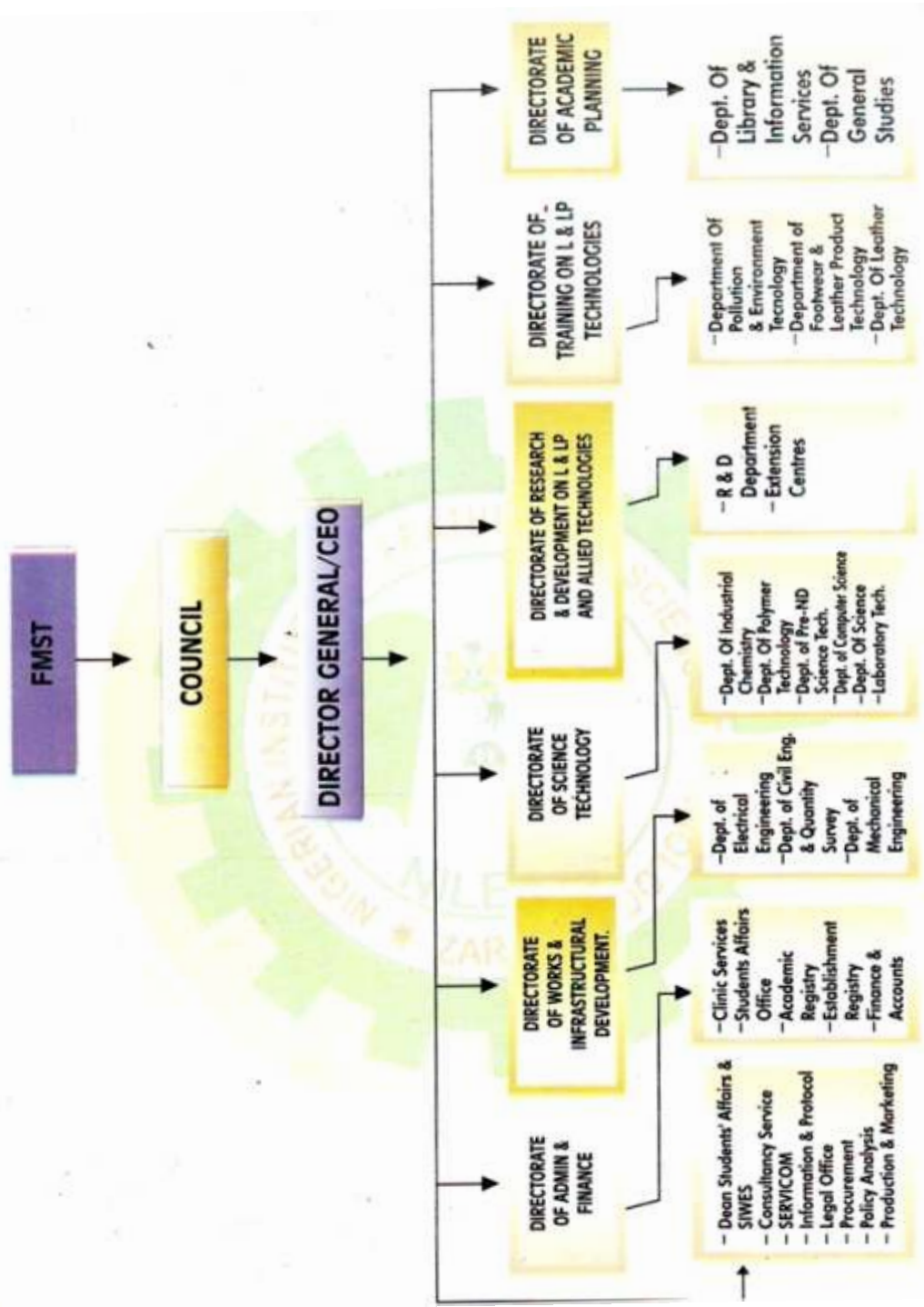
Fig. 1 Organogram of Nigeria Institute of Leather and Science Technology, Zaria

Literature Review/ Theoretical Framework
Organizations are living systems consisting of interacting units performing a task in a mutually dependent manner within a structure of scarce resources. It seems commonplace to suggest that conflicts would be present in such a setting. The parties in an organization may have a conflict about the distribution of resources, or they may have a more fundamental conflict about the very structure of their organization and the basic nature of their interaction. Once the parties are in a situation of goal incompatibility, their conflict develops in a dynamic fashion, initiating valuable and much-needed constructive changes or leading to escalating strategies and destructive consequences. As there is nothing pre-determined about its course or development, it seems erroneous to view conflict from a negative perspective only as destructive or dysfunctional. It is true that conflict may be uncomfortable, it may even be a source of problems, but it is absolutely necessary if change is to occur, if organizations are to survive and adapt. Organizational change and innovation does not just happen, it requires a stimulant. That stimulant is conflict. Administrators must accept the need to influence the developmental dynamics of a conflict, so that the parties' attitudes and actions will lead to better coordination and a more appropriate interdependence. They must not seek to stifle or eliminate organizational conflict for that is hardly a realistic goal. As Rico has noted, an organization devoid of conflict "... may indicate autocracy, uniformity, stagnation and mental fixity." It would also be protecting only the vested interests of the *status quo.* Administrators must accept and indeed occasionally encourage conflict, because change and other desirable consequences are products of conflict. The challenge administrator's face is to utilize such conflict management techniques that would ensure that as a conflict passes from a latent to a manifest phase, it proceeds towards its potential and realizes its constructive values.

Sources of Conflict
Organizational conflict appears in a variety of forms and has varying causes. These can generally be separated into several categories. Katz[15] identifies three sources of conflict. These are:
(1)   Structural conflict (conflict arising out of the need to manage the interdependence between different organizational sub-units),
(2)   Role conflict (conflict arising from sets of prescribed behavior) and
(3)   Resources conflict (conflict stemming from interest groups competing for organizational resources).

Robbins, identifies three sources of organizational conflict and indicates that an understanding of the source of a conflict improves the probability of effective conflict management. The main factors which serve as sources of conflict are identified as (1) communicational (conflicts arising from misunderstandings etc.), (2) structural (conflicts related to organizational roles), and (3) personal (conflicts stemming from individual differences).

a.   Intrapersonal Conflict
Intrapersonal conflict is internal to the individual (though its effects can profoundly influence organizational functioning) and is perhaps the most difficult form of conflict to analyze and manage. Intrapersonal conflict is basically a conflict between two incompatible tendencies. It arises when a stimulus evokes two different and incompatible tendencies and the individual is required to discriminate between these tendencies. In such a situation it is common for individuals to experience frustrations and to allow their conflict situation to be expressed in a range of behavioral strategies ranging from apathy and boredom to absenteeism, excessive drinking or destructive behaviour.[18] If such behavioral consequences are to be avoided, then it is essential to diagnose individual perception and utilize some techniques that would reduce anxiety-eliciting stimuli and increase consonance between individual behavior and organizational requirements.

b.   Interpersonal Conflict

Interpersonal conflict emphasizes the interaction of human factors in an organization. Here we are concerned with these factors as they appear in a dyadic relationship. We can broadly suggest two classes of factors as conflict sources. These are:

1.   Personal: Individuals are not identical, constant or consistent. When two individuals are brought together and kept together, each with his own qualities, needs and skills, a conflict may ensue if their attributes are not meshed together in a coordinated way. Interaction between individuals with different attitudes, values and needs can produce conflict behavior and affect organizational performance.[19]

2.   Functional: Individuals in organizations have roles which are expected sets of behavior associated with their position. In theory, individuals are not expected to engage in any discretionary behavior. Such specification would be consistent with organizational preferences for consistency and predictability. In practice, however, role specifications tend to be ambiguous and incomplete, and in their interaction with others, some individuals often feel dissatisfied with their role or position, or they may feel that their aspirations for higher positions are being frustrated. Interpersonal conflict can be accounted for, to a great extent, in terms of the incumbents' roles and their expectations in particular situations.

c.   Interdepartmental Conflict

The third major cause of organizational conflict is structural. Organizations are designed around product lines, regions or technical specialties. These activities are assigned to departments that often have mutually exclusive structured interests and goals and that interact within a framework of scarce resources and task dependence. When resources are relatively fixed and when one department's gain is at the expense of another, conflict should be expected.[20] If two sub-units in an organizational system have differentiated goals and are functionally interdependent, conditions exist for conflict. Interdependence produces the need for collaboration, but it also presents occasions for conflict. Other contextual factors which affect the interaction structure between departments and create the conditions for interdepartmental conflict include: different attitudes between line and staff units, organizational size (directly related to level of conflict) and standardization (inversely related to conflict), physical or communicational barriers between departments, unequal access to authority, rewards or organizational resources and ambiguity or uncertainty in assigning tasks or rewards to different departments. These, then, are the sources of conflict situations in organizations.How a conflict situation will change over time, how its interrelated components will alter and the environment, in which it occurs will respond, is dependent upon the administrator's efforts to manage or influence it. This, in turn, is related to one's understanding of the source of a specific conflict situation.

Conflict Resolution and Conflict Management

Conflict resolution involves the reduction, elimination, or termination of all forms and types of conflict. When people talk about conflict resolution they tend to use terms like negotiation, bargaining, mediation, or arbitration. Businesses can benefit from appropriate types and levels of conflict. That is the aim of conflict management, and not the aim of conflict resolution. Conflict management does not imply conflict resolution. Conflict management minimizes the negative outcomes of conflict and promotes the positive outcomes of conflict with the goal of improving learning in an organization (Rahim, 2002). Organizational learning is important. Properly managed conflict increases learning by increasing the amount of questions asked and encourage people to challenge the status quo (Luthans, Rubach, & Marsnik, 1995).

David Ingram's Ways of Managing Conflict in Organizations

1.   Positive Perspective

Accept conflict as a natural growth process and influence your company culture to view constructive conflict positively. It can help your organization to learn from its mistakes

and identify areas of needed improvement. Innovation can be inspired from creative solutions to internal or external conflicts, and new ways of thinking can emerge.

2.   Grievance procedure

Create a formal grievance procedure for all employees. Let employees at all levels of your organization know that their voices will always be heard, and respond promptly and reasonably to employees issues. This can prevent bad feelings from festering and growing into resentment and bitterness. Conflict is best handled quickly and openly. If your company culture is sufficiently friendly toward constructive conflict, your staff should see the value of letting their complaints, ideas and issues heard.

3.   Get to the cause

Focus on deep-rooted causes rather than superficial effects when assessing conflicts. Attempting to resolve the conflict by addressing surface issues will rarely create meaningful change or lasting solutions. Look deeper to address the reasons that incidents occur.

4.   Equal voices

Give all parties to a conflict an equal voice, regardless of their position, length of service or political influence. Conflict participants can become defensive if they feel they are being marginalized or are going through a process leading to a predetermined outcome. Go beyond simply giving everyone an equal chance to speak; give their arguments an equal weight in your mind when mediating a conflict.

5.   Resolution participation

Involve all parties, if possible, when drafting conflict resolutions. The theory of Management by Objectives (MBO) states that employees are generally more committed to goals that they have helped to create. The same holds true for conflict resolutions. There is more than one side to every conflict, and all sides should benefit from conflict resolution. Seek resolutions that will prevent the conflict from occurring again, rather than simply delaying a repeat occurrence.

Results/Discussion

100% of the respondents believes that conflict exist in the organization. The fact that the organization has suffered series of industrial actions by various trade unions ranging from the management of the organization inability to implement a certain condition of service. From the findings of this study 17% of the respondents advocated for organizational conflict, while 83% responded no to organizational conflict. 100% agreed that unresolved conflict could result into crisis. 66% of the respondents affirm that conflict makes them to work harder, as they may not want to entertain any form of query from superiors or quarrel from colleagues, while 34% responded that conflict, if not well managed will reduce their productivity. 17% believes that conflict would help to communicate well in the organization; this may be attributed to a saying that if there is no war there cannot be peace, while 83% do not subscribe that conflict would help to communicate well in organization.

Likewise from the findings of this study 93% of the respondents believe that conflict resolution brings unity to organization, while 7% do not subscribe to conflict resolution as a way of bringing unity to organization. Reasons to these submissions functions on individual differences as there are divergent causes and effects of organizational conflicts and resolution.

Conclusion
In this study, Endeavour has been made in the discussion of ways of managing organizational conflict which are as varied as its causes, origins and contexts. This study purist that effective conflict management succeeds in minimizing disruption stemming from the existence of a conflict, providing a solution that is satisfactory and acceptable, limiting some aspects of behavior as strategies of conflict settlement and efforts directed towards the parties' attitudes, situations as well as behavior as strategies of conflict resolution. All organizations, however simple or complex, possess a range of mechanisms or procedures for managing conflict which this organization (NILEST) built into the organizational structure and are consciously employed by administrators to influence the course and development of a conflict. The success or effectiveness of such procedures can be gauged by the extent to which they limit conflict behavior and the extent to which they help to achieve a satisfactory solution. It is the contention of this study that strategies of conflict avoidance, conflict prevention or institutionalization of conflict will change or replace coercive behavior, but that only the injection of a behavioral social scientist, acting in a facilitative, non-directive and no evaluative fashion, will achieve a resolution with respect to the basic issues, attitudes and structure of interaction.

Policy recommendations
Based on the findings of this study, the following affirmative line of actions will be appropriate for conflict resolution and management in the organization.
1. Administrators should care for optimal methods of conflict management by giving their strongest support to a strategy that *can* end a conflict in a satisfactory and self perpetuating manner.
2. Teams should never let professional conflicts become personal attacks on personality or culture, rather focus on actions that deals with problems constructively and realistically to build and maintain a healthy, productive work environment.
3. Administrators must accept the need to influence the developmental dynamics of a conflict. They must not seek to stifle or eliminate organizational conflict for that is hardly a realistic goal. It would be protecting only the vested interests of the *status quo.*
4. Administrators must accept and indeed occasionally encourage conflict, because change and other desirable consequences are products of conflict. The challenge administrator's face is to utilize such conflict management techniques that would ensure that as a conflict passes from a latent to a manifest phase, it proceeds towards its potential and realizes its constructive values.
5. Handle one issue at a time. Change can be overwhelming, conflict can be disconcerting. Rather than try to tackle every elements of change or tackle every point of the conflict, instead take on one issue at a time.
6. Time the conflict. Although you may not be able to control when a conflict arises, you can control when the conflict is addressed. Choose a time when all of the parties involved are willing and able to address the issue.

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