

Your name

Your student ID number

Otonye Daka

ID: UD75153BPR84332

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1.0 Introduction

Conflict management and negotiation are of prime importance in leadership. Conflict refers to non-harmonious coexistence because of interference or opposition. Conflict management is how individuals, teams and organizations engage to deal with differences in ideas and interests to achieve the best outcomes. Conflict is not necessarily bad and counterproductive. We are humans and we are all different. We act in ways that are not always in agreement with how others evaluate issues, and this could result to conflicts. We should therefore not avoid conflicts as a way of escaping or dealing with issues that arise in families, groups, and organizations. The unintended consequence of avoiding conflicts is that people could feel neglected, abandoned, and unappreciated.

The fact remains that conflicts cannot be eliminated from organizations. Avoiding conflicts can result to individuals, managers and leaders not getting to the root causes of the conflict, consequently we could be dealing with situations where people hide their feelings about issues and allow things to rot. The reality would dawn on us when things get out of hand and individuals become confrontational and aggressive.

Individuals, families, and organizations should be bold enough to deal with conflicts as they arise. It is not a good strategy to avoid conflicts and hope that things would sort out themselves. It is a sign of immaturity and weak leadership to allow value erosion and a decrease in productivity. Many homes have become dysfunctional because parents are not bold enough to challenge unacceptable behaviours in a timely manner. We have rebellious situations in organizations and nations due to inability of leaders to move swiftly to handle conflicts and drive resolutions.



As a leader in my organization, I am of the strong viewpoint that conflict is inevitable. What that means in very simple terms is that conflict cannot be eliminated in families, teams, organizations, and nations.

I believe to make progress in life, conflict should be accepted, encouraged, and managed. It is not realistic to expect to run an organization that is void of conflict, I am convinced that such an organization would not last because it cannot withstand the challenges of multi-dimensional conflicts to be managed every day. I am using conflict management as a way fostering closer relationship in the working group and driving continuous improvement by allowing divergent opinions in meetings. I am following up on several bright and creative ideas which came up in times of conflict resolution. All voices need to be heard and all persons treated equitably. At the end of the day, all major conflicts have always been settled at the negotiation table, we could as well begin to deal with conflicts at the smaller scale before they snowball into major crisis.

2.0 Types of Conflict

2.1 Intra-group conflict

This type of conflict happens when there are disagreements among members of the same group. It could be due to an individual desiring to achieve a different goal than the others in the group. It is difficult to expect every member of a group to agree with the goals and objectives of the group. Intra-group conflicts also occur between leaders and followers or between managers and subordinates. Leaders may take decisions and actions that which could ultimately result to decrease in productivity. Some negative emotions of intra-group conflicts include resentments, anxieties, or mistrusts. This has led to splinter groups and misalignment of priorities. It is important to bring everyone in the group to understand and pursue the vision of the group and organization.

2.2 Inter-group conflict

Organizations are composed of different sections, teams, and departments. When different groups in an organization seek to accomplish their objectives in an unaligned manner, inter-group conflicts arise. Inter-group conflicts can occur because of the organizational structure, conflict between the line and staff and between management and unions. Inter-group conflicts may happen because of differences in goals or objectives, misunderstanding of organizational priorities, competition among teams, due to fundamental differences in working organizational and business processes and supervisory styles.

Inter-group conflicts can also occur depending on shift patterns and work cycles. I have seen security guards trade blame over missing items not sure which shift was responsible for the theft. The harmony and good working relationship between groups in an organization is required for an organization to thrive and succeed.

2.3 Intra-Organizational conflict

You can experience conflict between superiors and supervisors, or within members of a team at the same level. These conflicts can be driven by personal behaviours, beliefs, values, and attitudes.

I have encountered situations where a manager of a group was much younger and more educated than the manager of another group and this resulted to some form of complex from the older manager. A lot of productive time and energy was wasted resolving conflicts. The groups could not focus on the important goals they had set out to achieve.



Intra-organizational conflicts can result to employees resigning and seeking other opportunities. It can also result to sabotage and loss of revenues. The aggression within the organization can go beyond team members and extend to families.

I have dealt with people with low motivation due to organizational changes that have impacted roles and created a lot of conflict and greatly disturbed the department from important goals and purposes. That was the result of a bad decision that was taken by management.

2.4 Inter-Organizational conflict

There are organizations that depend on each other for supplies and exchange of manpower and resources. Inter-organizational conflict occurs when there is disagreement on policy, project delivery schedules and timelines, productivity and quality assurance issues, disagreement over payment terms and conditions, etc. Once there is a trust deficiency between organizations, conflicts are bound to happen. This type of conflicts can cause employees to form unions and foster a common ground to deal with the conflicts with the attendant loss of productivity.



2.5 Intra-personal conflict

Intra-personal conflicts arise within an individual. It could be driven by motives or personal dilemmas. A worker may be faced with a situation where he or she needs to lie to protect the interest of a boss. We have had cases of staff clocking the wrong time just to cover up an absence due to an urgent family situation. Values and beliefs play a strong role in dealing with intra-personal conflicts. Role conflict can also create an intra-personal conflict, where an individual must choose between a role that offers a better pay but does not provide the commensurate job satisfaction and role that offers a lesser pay but is more exciting. To deal with intra-personal conflicts, one must be a person of character and conviction.



2.6 Inter-personal conflict

This is perhaps the most common type of conflict. It happens between individuals in families, communities, organizations both secular and religious. People may disagree over resources, plans, budget, and spending patterns. Discussions around promotion of staff at the workplace can trigger this conflict. Lack of information and communication, power play, personality differences and leadership styles can contribute to inter-personal conflicts.



3.0 Sources of Conflicts

Looking at the types of conflicts highlighted above, one can deduce that the following are some of the factors responsible for personal, group and organizational conflicts.

- Inadequate resources. We are all competing for scarce resources (money, people, data, or information). Currently, I am dealing with a situation where change of contracts has resulted to lower salaries of employees. The conflict has been deep and widespread.
- Non clarity of roles and responsibilities. Conflicts are bound to occur where there are no well-defined roles and responsibilities. Such roles must also be clearly communicated. I am aware of one team member who is constantly getting in the way of the other team member, reporting on tasks not under his jurisdiction. This had created an unhealthy situation within the team necessitating the team lead sending a notification clearly stating the job tasks of each team members and the reporting line. This conflict could lead to people pursuing different goals and not achieving the common objective.
- People not getting along. We are all different, we come from different backgrounds, culture, environment, experience. Attitude is everything. Some are humble while others are proud and pompous. Personality clashes are inevitable in a diverse team and organization. However, peoples' values and beliefs need to be respected. Conflicts can happen when people are over-bearing and want to exert their influence over others sometimes in forceful and disrespectful manner. Such behaviours can be picked up in communication styles including nonverbal communication. Differences in religion, gender, race, ethnicity, language, colour, sex, sexual orientation, disability are creating lot of conflicts in organizations. Respect for people is a requirement in managing and dealing with conflicts.
- Reward system. People expect to be appreciated and rewarded for the work they do and the value they add to organizations. Why do we have unions embarking on strikes from time to time, because reward system can create conflicts if employees do see that incentive schemes are skewed and biased or workers welfare being glossed over. There is always tension between equity and equality i.e., people being rewarded according to their relative contributions versus everyone expecting to receive same outcomes.



4.0 Socio-Cultural Aspects of Conflict and Negotiation

Everyone has culture. It may be socially inherited, shared or learned ways of living. Cultural differences are a factor in negotiations.

It is important to spend some time to understand how the culture of the negotiating parties can affect outcome of negotiations. Personal experience is a quick, easy way of knowing other cultures, however television shows and books also provide a good guide to knowing other cultures. Negotiators are advised to reflect on how to prepare for talks with people from their own culture and with people from other cultures. A negotiator does not want to offend the counterpart with insensitive behaviour to avoid unnecessary clashes during negotiations.

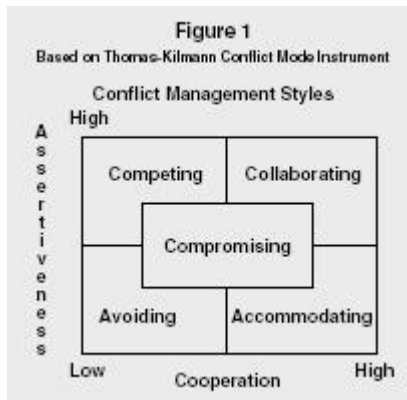
It has been advised that negotiators should conduct background research on the culture of the counterpart at the negotiation table. Also, it is a good practice to build in time for some discussion before getting into the negotiations. Faced with time demand, some cultures are more likely to blame the individual rather than the situation.

Negotiators should be ready to deal with emotional stress and deadlines. My learning from participation in negotiations across cultural lines is that you need to reduce stress at the negotiation table, it helps to take breaks to refresh and sometimes extend deadlines to achieve win-win solutions.



5.0 Conflict Resolution Methods

The Figure below outlines the various components of the Conflict Resolution Grid, which is the result of research presented by Thomas and Kilmann.



The grid comprised of five conflict management styles based assertiveness and cooperativeness. Assertiveness is about self-confidence, having a positive attitude and motivation to achieve own goals, objectives, and outcomes. It is the ability to communicate your needs, feelings, and opinions in an open and honest manner without violating the rights of others. while cooperativeness is amenability i.e., willingness to work with others to achieve a common goal.

1. **Avoidance.** It shows when an individual is not willing help others to achieve their goals, but also not pursuing their own goals aggressively. The result is that the original conflict is never directly resolved. This can make sense if the conflict is perceived to be trivial and not worth spending the time and resources to address. Avoidance also comes into play if there is no chance of winning.

I have used conflict avoidance as a way of allowing situations to cool off or used it to buy time until I gathered all the facts of the matter at hand. I had recently allowed a staff emotional outburst to calm down sufficiently before having a meaningful conversation that addressed the issues at hand and agreed actions going forward to avoid a repeat of such a situation in the future.

2. **Competition.** This style ultimately results in a win-lose situation. This is about an individual reaching preferred outcomes at the expense of others. Now, there are advantages of this style if applied in an emergency or organization cost cutting measures and control. However, individuals can allow themselves to lose in issues they do not feel strongly about. It can be seen as a form of winning through losing.
3. **Accommodation.** This is about obliging. An individual treats his desired and preferred outcomes as less important to allow others to achieve their outcomes. This style is necessary to preserve future relationships or when people realize that they are wrong or when an issue is more important to the other party.
4. **Compromise.** Each side in the conflict need to make concessions. This style is helpful when both sides in the conflict have equal power and it is necessary to find a temporary

but timely solution to the conflict. It should not be used for solving complex problems as results of this style are always sub-optimal. This is a useful strategy when dealing with relatively small concerns, it saves both parties' time.

5. **Collaboration.** This style enables individuals to work together to achieve a defined and common business purpose. This is often described as the win-win scenario. Communication is clear and knowledge sharing is effective. It improves the way teams work together to solve problems. However, this style requires sincere effort by all parties involved.

Of the five conflict management styles described above, only collaboration strategy can be employed to avoid win-lose situation and consistently deliver win-win solutions. However, depending on the specific situation and desired outcomes, any of the researched conflict resolution styles can be appropriate. What is fundamentally important is to understand the advantages and disadvantages of each style. Collaboration attempts to channel conflict in a positive direction.



Research by Borisoff and Victor has identified five steps in the conflict management process namely: assessment, acknowledgement, attitude, action, and analysis.

5.1 Assessment

This is the information and data gathering stage. Decision is made around what is central or not central to the conflict, what each party wants and areas of possible compromise.

5.2 Acknowledgement

During this step, each party attempts to hear out the other and build the required empathy. It is also the feedback step where one party demonstrate that the position of the other party is understood without necessarily agreeing with it. The other party is encouraged to openly communicate concerns.

5.3 Attitude

This step deals with stereotypes, and culturally based behaviors. This step also possible misinterpretations. One party can be misjudged to be blunt and rude while the other party misinterprets as deceptive. These interpretations or misinterpretations may have little to do with the actual message or its intent but rather may represent learned communication styles. In dealing with attitudes of men and women, I have understood that the remarkable difference in the communication styles. I have dealt with perceptions of politeness, body language and nonverbal communications, manner of speaking based on gender sensitivity. It is important to maintain an open mind toward all parties.

5.5 Action

This is the step where the chosen conflict resolution method is actively implemented. There is opportunity to identify potential trouble spots, resolve conflict based on trust and continuous feedback. Parties must ensure self-awareness of communication style and be open to new issues that might come up and look for productive solutions.

5.6 Analysis

This is the last step of the conflict management process where parties decide on what they will do, and then summarize and review what they have agreed upon. It is also the step to ascertain whether each party's requirements have been addressed and possibly met. I have learned that I should approach conflict management as an ongoing process and actively monitor both the short-term and long-term results of the conflict resolution.

6.0 Harnessing Conflicts

As earlier stated, avoidance isn't the best approach to conflict rather conflict should be seen more as an opportunity to grow families and organizations.

How can we harness conflict in the family, teams, and workplace?



1. I am Changing My Thinking, Changing My Approach, Changing My Performance

I am investing the time to understand the causes, complexities, and opportunities of conflict. As a leader, I am exploring deeply how I can use conflict to stimulate discussions, promote collaboration, benefit from diversity and inclusion and grow my team. I am getting to hear more and more voices and contributions. I recently realized that the quiet ones could hold the key to the breakthrough ideas and solution I have been looking for.

2. Becoming a Better Listener

As a leader, I realize that I do not have all the answers and I can't be always right. Therefore, it cannot always be my way. I am therefore learning to be very careful when to act and when to listen. I want individuals in my team to feel valued and be assured that they would be heard. I am also using my meetings as a place for others to listen and learn.

I am actively encouraging my team members not to be shy to have different perspectives rather they should collaborate to solve problems, jointly develop plans, and present for decision making.

3. I am Getting Trained

I am on course to get better at conflict management and negotiation. I am investing the time, energy, and finances to learn the skills of productive conflict management. I am leading a culturally diverse team, so it is not a case of one-size-fits-all. I am keenly learning how to adapt conflict-management approaches based on personality differences among team members, thereby limiting my assumptions and expanding my approach to conflict resolution.

4. I am Training Others

I am already applying the learnings from this course in training sessions for my team, equipping them to be more productive and utilize the opportunities inherent in moments of workplace conflict. I am challenging my team to understand how to address and optimize the potential of conflict in the team and wider organization. I want my team members to cultivate trust among themselves so that they can confidently challenge one another's ideas, be reasonable in managing their emotions and pursue greater team cohesion.

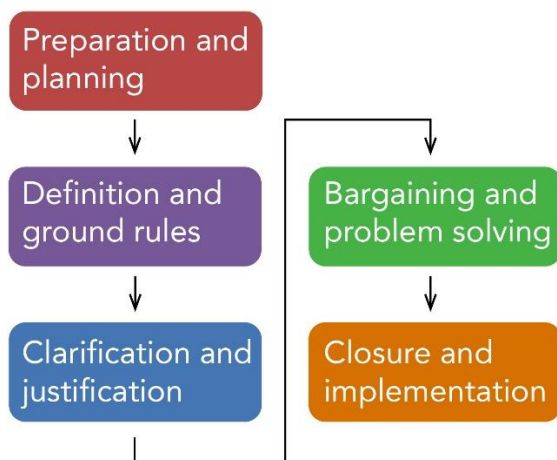
5. I am Creating Accountability and Collaboration

I am challenging my team to consider diverse opinions and strategies, as diversity is a strength and not a weakness. Team must seek innovative ways to move forward. I am encouraging openness, creative collaboration and accommodation among team members and discouraging passing the buck. Conflict may be inevitable; however, I am harnessing conflict to drive success and productivity.

7.0 Planning for the Negotiation

I have been leading a project that has experienced significant disruption due to external factors leading to prolongation of time and extension of project delivery. I am now planning for the negotiation of the cost proposal submitted by vendors for compensation. The following are some key considerations as I plan for the negotiations:

- Know whether I am in a win-win or win-lose situation.
- Try to figure out the best resolution I can expect, what is a fair and reasonable outcome.
- What information do I have and how much more data do I need to gather?
- What are my competitive advantages i.e., my strongest points?
- Am I very clear on the goals and of the negotiation?
- Am I worried about being taken advantage of?
- What is the minimum I can accept to resolve the conflict?
- What is the maximum I can ask for?
- What is the maximum I can give away?



The vendors have worked on the project for the last 3 years, I have therefore established a continuing working relationship with them. It is important to leave the negotiation with my organization and vendors feeling they have "won." It is very important that the vendors don't feel that they "lost." Such a feeling could result to lack of commitment to the safe and successful

delivery of the project. I believe that beneath the hardened positions on both sides are common or shared interests.

As part of the planning for the negotiation, we have held pre-negotiation meetings where we agreed to avoid attacking the other party personally, separate the individuals from the issues and maintain a rational, goal-oriented frame of mind. We would emphasize and pursue win-win solutions, frame options in terms of the other person's interests. A critical element in the upcoming negotiation is to understand the other person's underlying interests. I am sure that we can find the commonalities between us and minimize the differences in a way that is mutually acceptable to both sides.

8.0 Guidelines for Effective Negotiation



As part of preparations for my upcoming negotiation, I am working on the following guidelines for effective negotiation:

- I am acquiring as much information about the vendors' interests and goals.
- What could be their strategy? I am preparing to frame solutions in terms of their interests and needs.
- I am working with Contracting & Procurement to put together a concrete strategy. We must anticipate how the vendors' will respond; how strong is their position; will they want to stick to a hardened position?
- We are looking at trying for a small concession early thereby beginning with a positive approach. We will also try to establish mutual trust before starting the negotiations.
- We are determined to address issues at the negotiation table and not the personalities. We will work hard to separate the people issues from the problems on the project that led to the prolongation and extension of time.
- We have resolved to deal with any aggression calmly.
- We will emphasize win-win solutions and look for alternatives that would the vendors to declare victory.
- We will go through the negotiation based on principles, and not succumb to emotions or pressure.

9.0 Know Your Best Alternative



I am aware of my BATNA (Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement). I am currently exploring the vendors BATNA. It is clear currently what the bottom line is going to be for both client and the vendors. Both parties have accepted they will make concessions on their demands, but there is a point they will not cross, therefore we are looking forward to a tough negotiation and very likely the negotiation will deadlock initially for both parties to further review their alternatives.

We are utilising BATNA in negotiation and are aware what our best alternatives are to the current proposed agreement.

BATNA is not a static concept. Therefore, we are aware of our BATNA before beginning the negotiation. However, plan is that at every point in the negotiation, the team would revise the BATNA, as any agreement would be compared against the BATNA to assess whether we have achieved a viable agreement.

We are trying to step into the shoes of the vendors before we go into the negotiations. We are asking what options the vendors have if they fail to secure a deal in this negotiation. This is a pointer to how strong their position is in the negotiation and may help us to understand their BATNA.

10.0 Personal Application

Going through this very important research, there are some take aways I am already applying and a lot more I need to deepen the application. Some of the main questions I am working on as part of my personal application of conflict management and negotiation are:

1. What are the important personal and organizational consequences of the conflict?
2. What are possible future consequences?
3. What are the substantive issues?
4. What are the underlying factors that have led to the situation?
5. Am I an active Listener?
6. Am I improving my communication skills?
7. Am I able to separate the problem from the person in a conflict?

8. Am I focusing on the past and blaming people?
9. How am I focusing on the future and supporting my team to tackle the problem jointly?
10. How can I change what seems like a "win-lose" situation to a "win-win"?
11. Am I opening lines of communication, increasing trust and cooperativeness?
12. How can I support my team not to allow conflicts escalate, and avoid frustration, resentment, and mistrust?
13. How can I reduce tension through humour, that is to be patient to allow people "vent," and make a small concession as a signal of good faith?
14. How do I control issues i.e., depersonalize the conflict?
15. How do I build confidence and let my team know that we are in this together?
16. Can I focus less on my position and more on understanding the interests and needs of others?
17. Am I effectively seeking Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods?
18. Am I able to demonstrate an understanding of how to manage conflicts in a way and manner that leads to constructive outcomes?

I will apply the learnings from this research to be more effective by negotiating and managing conflict. I will manage conflict actively through reduction, elimination, or avoidance. I will prepare effectively for a negotiation and reach mutually beneficial agreements.

I am motivated to try harder-to "win", increase commitment, enhance group loyalty can lead to innovative breakthroughs. I will clarify underlying problems, facilitate change, and focus attention on basic issues and be solution oriented.

I will make my key values more visible and avoid withholding of critical information. I understand that conflict can lower productivity and relationships ruined.



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