

THE ROLE OF COUNSELLING IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND ITS ECONOMIC EFFECT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Conflict is a common factor in every relationship, economic activities not exempted. There will always be differences in opinions, values, needs, desires, habits, attitudes among others. If appropriate foundation is not laid early in an economic relationship, the activity may be established on a weak foundation that may not be strong enough for the growth of every economy. Conflict has been one of the realities of our present human existence. This is because it is inevitable for people to interact without any problem especially in any economic activities. Though, it is somehow a problem, it has both positive and negative effects on human experiences. Its effect determines its management measures which is commonly known as conflict resolution. Conflict resolution can be defined as any method adopted to settle, manage, determine, and resolve differences that may arise among individuals, organizations, nations, communities among others. Economic conflicts may arise because of perceived differences in relation to interests, positions, rights, goals, needs, values to mention but only a few. Counselors employ effective method to enhance smooth economic growth. The counselor also selects the appropriate counseling strategy based on the effect of conflicts on the issue at hand.

Conflict is defined as an unavoidable aspect of everyday life. Whether it is with others, yourself or an organization, conflict is an inevitable aspect of life

experience. Understanding how it starts and how it escalates goes a long way towards knowing how to use it to your advantage. (www.ehow.com, 2014).

Conflict resolution is a term that can be defined as the methods and processes concerned in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict. Some of these processes and methods applied in conflict resolution include mediation, negotiation, diplomacy, mapping, advocacy, group facilitation, healing circles, evaluation as well as creative peace building (en.wikipedia.org).

Citing a review of definitions of organizational conflicts in (1990) by Robert Rakhim notes the following common elements in the definitions of conflict:

- There are recognized opposing interests between parties in a zero-sum situation.
- There must be a belief by each side that the other one is or will act against them.
- This belief is likely to be justified by actions taken.
- Conflict is a process, having developed from their past interactions.

Betieng (2002) believes that conflict makes a society more vital and responsive to the population and its attendant problems. Disagreements occur amongst individuals and groups resulting in changes that create room for change. Robertson (1997) affirms that such changes arising from conflicts prevent society from stagnation and also the prince (Machiavelli) who asserts that “Violence is the only midwife to any society that is pregnant in change”. For this to be resolved, the opposing parties must show sufficient understanding and co-operation with each other and work together for a common goal (Ugabi, Orim, Awah and Ikwuazomm (2005)). Anyaliwhu (1997) sees conflict as a base for stabilization of friendship between people and other interpersonal associations. Contending with this, Ezinyi (2001) points out that the Chinese people see conflicts an opportunity for change: If we go by this it then means that conflict on its own is neither positive nor negative. Instead, what determine the way a conflict goes is our own personal attitude and our background information about the conflict that normally dictates the way we manage it. People with negative connotations, manage it in a destructive way and the resultant effects is all negative words like the issue of Middle East. All the same, people with positive connotations like the Chinese, manage it in a constructive way and the resultant effects is development, change, understanding, evolution, peace, friendship, progress, love, communication, interaction among others. Meyers (1999) perceived conflicts in a compatibility of actions or goals and that people in conflict, whether their perceptions are accurate or not, sense that one side gains is the other’s loss.

In the absence of economy, the entire world will be in confusion and instability everywhere. Instability goes with lack of peace and development. A number of individuals or groups of different agencies have responsibilities in this direction. Chijioke (2009) had it that the well being of any society is rooted on the

well being of various individuals that form the society, and that if there should be socio-economic development of the society, there must be socio-economic development in the individuals that form the society. In accordance with this, Nwosu (2009) also pointed out that every society aspires for development and the well-being of any society depends on the aggregate well-being of the individuals that make up the society. So, far productivity and development are in the individual which make up the society. We should know that the economy of any society is weighed by the productivity and development of that society. Any society that is experiencing negative conflict has its economy adversely affected and must seek for counsellors and economic experts for improvement.

Types of Conflict

Conflict can take many different forms. Being able to identify the type of conflict brewing or in play helps with the resolution process. There are five types to consider.

1. **Structural:** These are caused by external forces such as occur within organization-workloads, availability of resources, time constraints. Structural conflicts require structural solutions.
2. **Data:** These have to do with the information processes in place within the organization. Disagreements over data can be caused by the process itself or misunderstandings on how the process should work. Changes in the process or a thorough explanation on how it works are the solution approach needed.
3. **Values:** These are based on individual belief systems and are the hardest to resolve. The best approach here is to encourage an understanding and respect of each other's values.
4. **Relationship:** These typically centre on conflicting personality issues which lead to negative behaviours. Sometimes resolution can be reached through understanding each other's reasons for disagreement depending on how ingrained said issues are. Boundary setting in terms of establishing a cordial respect for those involved may be all that's possible in this instance.
5. **Interests:** These happen as result of perceived threats to one's goals, or needs. Emotional and psychological factors may be present on both sides. A solution-based approach that addresses each party's interests, desired outcomes and positive intentions can reduce the likelihood of perceived threats dictating the resolution process.

Conflict Process

Conflict occurs between two or more people who disagree on an issue that threatens their respective goals, values or needs. How the participants in a

disagreement perceive this threat determines to a great extent how heated the conflict can become. With only so many resources and opportunities available within any social setting, it's not uncommon for conflicts to arise. On the contrary, when handled effectively conflict can lead to personal growth and create the change needed to improve interpersonal relations overall.

The ultimate root of conflict happens when you perceive something or someone as a threat to some area of your well being. Threats typically trigger emotional or psychological responses. When this happens, your ability to view and approach the situation in an objective manner is hampered. This, in turn, makes it seem like there's a limited number of solutions to a particular problem. Once perspective is hampered by emotion, communication becomes difficult. Focusing on each party's vested interests, rather than the perceived threats is a more effective way of handling conflict. This approach creates an environment in which both party's needs are expressed. The shifting of focus works to reduce the emotional drive to protect your interests. The interaction then becomes a solution-based exchange where emotional factors can be expressed and addressed.

Karl Marx Theories of Conflict

Karl Marx, a German theorist and political activist of the 19th century on his popular theory on why conflict exists attributed the basis of conflict to materialism, in that norms established in the marketplace (the world of work) dictate our individual class associations and interests therein. He theorized that the resulting set of class consciousnesses, representing different socioeconomic levels and interests, leads to the inevitable conflicts that we face from day to day.

According to Marx, the individual's sense of a class consciousness was necessary for constructive change to happen. He viewed society's power holders as opposed to the notion of class consciousness as a means to maintain their positions. Instead, power holders promoted the notion of individual consciousness as a way to weaken the impact of mass, or class, conflicts. Many of today's economists and sociologists view Marx's theory to be a prevailing force within modern day society.

Effects of Conflict

As with all things emotional, the ingredients for conflict can be present long before an actual altercation takes place. The ability to identify and address conflict at an early stage reduces the likelihood of escalation. To do this, it helps to understand how people are apt to communicate (or not communicate) their concerns.

One theory holds that individuals typically fall into one of the four basic personality temperaments: choleric--these are bold, direct communicators who can be intimidating, but are open to change; phlegmatic--these are fact-driven types who

dislike conflict, and change; sanguine - these types welcome conflict for the expression and exchange of ideas. They see change as an adventure and melancholic; these types are all about the status quo. They don't like to rock the boat. They don't like change. Conflict, whether expressed or not, invokes change. Whether the change is positive or negative depends on how the situation is handled. Those who fall under a personality type that's uncomfortable with change benefit most from an exchange that allows for the expression of vested interests and needs. Understanding the reasons for a conflict and the need for change is essential to moving the process of conflict resolution along.

Economic Effect of Conflict

The relationship between civil war and economic performance has recently come to the forefront of the economic debate. The growing interest in the economic causes and consequences of civil wars has spurred a large number of studies both in political science and in economics. Some of these studies explore the factors that affect the likelihood of conflict onset and duration (e.g., Collier and Hoeffler (1998, 2004), Montalvo and Reynal-Querol (2005)); other studies find a negative relationship between political instability and investments (e.g., Alesina and Perotti (1996) and Svensson (1998) The purpose of our paper is to effectively narrow down the analysis of the economic consequences of wars to a context where the endogeneity problem is relatively easier to address, namely the relationship between the onset of violent conflict and investors' perceptions as measured by asset market reactions. By asset markets we mean not only stock markets, but also the markets in which currencies, standardized commodities (such as oil and agricultural products), and futures contracts written on these underlying assets are traded. We do this by relying on a methodology that is widely applied in finance, but very seldom employed in the conflict literature: the event study approach. Furthermore, a growing literature has addressed the relationship between polarization and conflict, by examining whether the degree of polarization in a society can explain the likelihood of conflict onset or the duration of conflicts once initiated (e.g., Horowitz (1985), Montalvo and Reynal-Querol (2005a, 2005b)). Very little is known, however, about the degree to which markets incorporate information about the extent of polarization and its potential effects on conflict. In this paper we try to establish to link between conflict onset, polarization, and asset market reactions by conducting our event studies separately for high and low polarization settings.

Conflict Resolution

Nicholson (1992) notes that a conflict is resolved when the inconsistency between wishes and actions of parties is resolved. Negotiation is an important part of conflict resolution, and any design of a process which tries to incorporate positive conflict from the start needs to be cautious not to let it degenerate into the negative types of conflict. Every person has distinctive viewpoints that are equally valid (from

where they stand) as the other party involved in the conflict. Each person's viewpoint makes a contribution to the whole and requires consideration and respect in order to form a complete solution.

This wider view can open up the communication transaction possibilities. It may require one party to change their mind chatter that says: "For me to be right, others must be wrong" (Alexelrod, 1984). To apply conflict resolution skills, individuals need to consider how the problem or the relationship will look over a substantial period of time. Looking at the conflict or problem in question in terms of a longer timeframe can help individuals become more realistic about the consequences of the conflict as well as exploring options to resolve the conflict (Alexelrod, 1984). People experiencing conflict tend to respond on the basis of their perceptions of the situation, rather than an objective review of it. This is where having a counselling intervention can benefit someone in overcoming their subjective frame of reference. Subsequently, people filter their perceptions (and reactions) through their values, culture, beliefs, information, experience, gender, and other variables. Conflict responses are both filled with ideas and feelings that can be very strong and powerful guides to our sense of possible solutions (Healey, 1995).

As in any problem, conflicts contain substantive, procedural and psychological dimensions to be negotiated. In order to best understand the threat perceived by those engaged in a conflict, all of these dimensions need to be considered. When conflicts arise (or are likely to arise), it is important to develop healthy, functional and positive coping mechanisms to identify them, their consequences, as well as the strategies which can be used to manage them. New opportunities and possibilities may be discovered which in turn will transform the personal conflict into a productive learning experience (Healey, 1995).

Creative problem-solving strategies are essential to the application of positive approaches to conflict resolution. There is great importance in developing the ability to learn how to transform the situation from one in which it is 'my way or the highway' into one in which people entertain new possibilities that have been otherwise elusive (Ury, 1988).

Conflict Conciliation

Conflict is a social process that is exacerbated when individual members of a group take sides in the debate. Among the methods to resolve conflict is mediation of the dispute by a group member not currently involved in the dispute. More specifically, a mediator is defined as a person who attempts to resolve a conflict between two group members by intervening in this conflict. Put simply, the mediator can be thought of as a disinterested guide directs the disputants through the process of developing a solution to a disagreement (Forsyth, 2006). Although the tendency will

be for group members who are uninvolved in the dispute to remain uninvolved, in some cases, the sheer intensity of the conflict may escalate to the point where mediation is unavoidable. Third party mediation of the conflict opens avenues for communication between group members in conflict. It allows members to express their opinions and request clarification of other member's standpoints while the mediator acts as a form of protection against any shame or "loss of face" that either disputant may experience. This can be done by shedding a positive light on the reconciliation that was made during the mediation process. For instance, if it was negotiated that two cashiers will rotate the weekends they work, the mediator might point out that now each worker gets a weekend off every two weeks (Forsyth, 2006).

The mediator can also offer assistance in refining solutions and making counter-offers between members, adjusting the time and location of meetings so that they are mutually satisfying for both parties (Forsyth, 2006). According to Forsyth (2006), there are three major mediation approaches: Inquisitorial procedure- Using this procedure, the mediator asks each of the disputants a series of questions, considers the two sets of responses, and then selects and imposes a mandatory solution on the members. The inquisitorial procedure is the least popular approach to mediation.

Arbitration- Here, mediation involves the two disputants explaining their arguments to the mediator, who creates a solution based on the arguments presented. Arbitration is best for low intensity conflict, but is the most favoured mediation style overall. Moot- The moot approach involves an open discussion between disputants and the mediator about the problems and potential solutions. In the moot approach, the mediator cannot impose a mandatory solution. After arbitration, a moot is the most preferred mediation style.

Benefits of Conflict Resolution

There are genuine benefits to resolving conflict that would otherwise not present them if it didn't arise. Benefits can come in the form of personal growth, stronger relationship bonds, increased productivity and an overall boost in morale. The occurrence of conflict opens up areas that would otherwise find little, to no motivation for growth and change. Examples of the benefits to effective resolution can be found in all areas of society. Conflicts occurring on the international level have led to numerous trade relation agreements across the globe as well as peace treaties invoked by countries with opposing interests. In the areas of business, strategies and approaches have increasingly favoured the "win-win" perspective in business negotiations. As far as personal relationships go, the ability to address concerns and interests makes for long-term bonds that strengthen over time.

Conflict Counselling

By ([Exforsys](#), September 12, 2009)

Conflicts in organizations do not necessarily equate to a negative and unproductive environment. In fact, disagreements and arguments that lead to conflict are essential for individuals to grow and mature in their work performance. With the existence of conflicts, people realize their mistakes, understand differences in one another, and they strive to make a better organization. However, in cases when conflicts are mismanaged, the results are adverse. In order to resolve a conflict, sometimes a third party is needed and this is especially true for group conflicts not in marital. With the help of the mediator, the individuals or the groups are able to identify the issue, deal with the conflict in productive ways and reach a sound resolution. For two individual whose relationship at work and productivity are greatly affected because of a worsening conflict, counselling may be an effective method. Every organization employs counsellors for their employees. The need to do counselling sessions in the workplace may be caused by various reasons. One of these is the existence of conflicts or bad interpersonal relationships among employees, including the management. When the conflict is negatively becoming public and affects the work environment, counselling might just help in working out the situation.

What is Counselling?

Technically, counselling is defined as a pre-emptive means aimed at correcting an erring behaviour and requires the need for corrective action. The term is relevant to guiding, consoling, or advising individuals who need help in problem resolution. In an attempt to resolve disputes between two employees, the process is done through a private talk or one-on-one communication. It is an open discussion between the employee involved and the counsellor or adviser on the issue causing the argument (problem). During a counselling session, the counsellor interviews the person and helps reach a realization through an interpersonal approach. Counselling in group conflicts is rarely done because it is difficult to address individual concerns and problems toward the cause of the conflict. Instead, a conflict mediator or a third party can take care of facilitating the situation.

Tambawal (2007) stated that counselling is concerned with the feelings, attitudes and emotional dispositions of an individual about himself and the situations facing him. Counselling is devised to provide an interacting relationship in which the counsellor attempts to help an individual to better himself in relation to his present and future problems. Employee counselling for conflict situations has to be carefully undertaken by both the counsellor and the person being counselled. Since the process may be sensitive and susceptible to the feelings, the counsellor should be in the right position to conduct the process. In an organization, the process can be performed by the supervisor or team leader, manager, or more commonly, the HR personnel. For a

personality conflict between two co-workers, either the HR staff or a counselling expert can intervene. At times, the manager can mediate the situation. An effective counsellor is a good and effective listener. Advice should be concrete and encouraging. The counsellor must help boost the self-esteem of the person and create a positive stance.

Objectives of Counselling Session

One of the objectives of the interview in counselling is to let the individual speak up and open up about the issue at hand. The person may want to disclose what is keeping him from wanting to settle the dispute with the other party. Through this, the counsellor can create new perspectives and identify areas that need to be changed or altered. Counselling also helps establish clear goals and generate action plans for conflict resolution. Reviewing the progress or development of the situation is also another objective of counselling. This is to monitor or to check if the intensity of the conflict has somehow decreased and a peaceful resolution is on its way. During the counselling session and after the interview, the counsellor should show full support to be able to perform the action plans and check for any progress.

Benefits of Conflict Counselling

Counselling in a conflict process is very helpful and beneficial in many ways for the individuals and the organization. For one, it helps the disputing parties to understand themselves and reflect on their viewpoints. Counselling seeks to let the parties take the situation in a more objective approach and allows them to develop new perspectives. The realization they get from counselling helps them develop a positive outlook and desirable attitude toward the situation. With a change in perception, the individuals are motivated to find out alternative solutions to the cause of the conflict. Lastly, counselling during an argument prepares the person to manage the situation.

Conclusions

Peace advances the economic development of society by fostering conditions that are conducive to business and investment. At the same time, business can play a decisive role in building and strengthening peace through job and wealth creation. Yet the value of peace to the world economy is poorly understood and rarely discussed outside of academia. A key objective of the Institute is to help raise awareness of the global cost of violence, which in 2010, is estimated to have been more than \$8.12 trillion. If the world had been just 25% more peaceful in 2010 the global economy would have reaped an additional economic benefit just over US\$2 trillion. This amount would pay for the 2% of global GDP per annum investment estimated by the Stern Review to avoid the worst effects of climate change, cover the cost of achieving the Millennium Development Goals, eliminate the public debt of Greece, Portugal and

Ireland, and address the one-off rebuilding costs of the most expensive natural disaster in history – the 2011 Japanese earthquake and tsunami.

In addition to identifying the global value of peace, the Institute for Economic and Peace (IEP) is also working to further understand the impact of increased peacefulness on company markets, cost structures and profits. IEP believes that business can have an active role in peace building efforts at the local, national and global level which are also consistent with higher profits and larger markets. On the other hand, counselling in conflict resolution is still another way of restraining people's frustration because when personal conflict leads to frustration and loss of efficiency, counselling may prove to be a helpful antidote. Although few organizations can afford the luxury of having professional counsellors on the staff, given some training, managers may be able to perform this function. Nondirective counselling, or "listening with understanding", is little more than being a good listener—something every manager should be. Sometimes the simple process of being able to vent one's feelings—that is, to express them to a concerned and understanding listener, is enough to relieve frustration and make it possible for the frustrated individual to advance to a problem-solving frame of mind, better able to cope with a personal difficulty that is affecting his work adversely. The nondirective approach is one effective way for managers to deal with frustrated subordinates and co-workers.

There is other more direct and more diagnostic ways that might be used in appropriate circumstances. The great strength of the nondirective approach (nondirective counselling is based on the client-centered therapy of Carl Rogers), however, lies in its simplicity, its effectiveness, and the fact that it deliberately avoids the manager-counsellor's diagnosing and interpreting emotional problems, which would call for special psychological training. Listening to people with sympathy and understanding is unlikely to escalate the problem, and is a widely used approach for helping people to cope with problems that interfere with their effectiveness in their place of work.

Recommendations

- Counsellors should be made to do their research work well and learn to employ appropriate counselling skills like value of inclusion, peacemaking, forgiveness, emotional, spiritual and moral healing among others.
- Non-governmental organisations are advised to help the counsellors to create conducive environments in different business organisations in the society as this will contribute in the growth of our economy.
- The management of different business organisation and establishments should be occasionally organize seminars, conferences and workshops for their employees on issues like conflict management and preventions.

- The counsellor thought his/her initiative be able to change the information environment of disputes by further editing all involved in conflicts. This will help to achieve a healthy atmosphere.
- The counsellor should always be able to frame the issues involved in the conflict in such a way that the conflict can be managed easily.
- Parents or caregivers should be sensitized by the government on transforming the creativity in their young ones to higher creativity in their young ones to higher creativity in the society. This is in support of Igbo adage that “a chick that will grow into a cock can be spotted the very day it hashes”.

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