

## CONFLICTS AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA CUSTOM SERVICE: AN INSIGHT

**Chibuike E Madubuegwu**

*PhD Scholar, Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikwe University,  
Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria. Email: totlechi@gmail.com*

**Samuel I Ugwuozor (PhD)**

*Department of Political Science, Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu State Nigeria.*

**Ogah A Onwe**

*Nigeria Custom Service, Enugu Command, Nigeria.*

**Udenta Nkiruka C (PhD)**

*Department of Political Science, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Agbani Nigeria.*

### ABSTRACT

Organizational conflict and effects on productivity is a topical issue among scholars and practitioners in recent time. This paper therefore examined peculiarity of conflicts and conflict management strategies within the organizational context of Nigeria Custom Service, NSC. The research design of the discourse is a descriptive survey study and analysis where questionnaire instruments were administered to 430 sample size and responses calculated in statistical mean rating score in credence to the four research questions which reflects on factors and effects of conflict and conflict management measures and its assessment. Interestingly, the findings of this paper revealed that conflict management measures deployed recorded abysmal grand mean score of 2.4 below the established the calculated decision rule of 2.5. This indication therefore implied conflict management procedures in the Nigeria Custom Service are not viable which therefore elicit the need for reform. The paper therefore recommend for centralized and decentralized conflict management mechanism, exposure to in-service workshop on conflicts and conflict management techniques as among the fundamentals to ensure optimal performance and productivity in Nigeria Custom

### ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords:*  
Conflict, Conflict  
Management, Productivity  
and Nigeria Custom Service

*Article History:*  
Received: 11 Sep 2022  
Accepted: 21 Sep 2022  
Available Online: 24 Sep 2022

© 2022 The authors. Published by ZARSMI UAE. This is an open access article under the Creative Commons AttributionNonCommercial 4.0

## 1. INTRODUCTION

State institutions are statutory in roles and service to priorities of national development. Hence, the functionality of state institutions is invariably expressed in organizational framework that defines its managerial structures, personnel roles and procedural process for optimal performance. The most critical component of its organizational process is the personnel which invariably represent its work force in credence to the performance of statutory roles. Hence, public perception and prestige accorded to state institution or institutions are function of personnel disposition to its duties and the public. In the course of discharging statutory duties there are inevitable instances of misconception of roles, overzealous attitude and deliberate infraction amid other factors which breeds conflicts that neither undermine optimal performance nor create negative public image or strengthen relations for effective management and better performance. Nigeria as a developing economy has over the decades and years under successive governments created institutions in response to expectations of national development. These institutions are not immune from organizational conflicts or institutional conflicts in an economy that is grappling with myriad societal vices, institutional inadequacies and widespread indiscipline. Hence, the issue of work place conflict is not novel as Olonade, et al. (2021) revealed that workplace conflict is thus endemic despite the best management practices in organizations and manifests in various forms as an intrinsic and unavoidable feature of the employment relationship. It is, by description, an ongoing process that is more likely to occur in hierarchical organizations where people with differing perspectives, opinions, and backgrounds interact. However, conflict in work-relations is not an aberration since it creates or provides an opportunity for correction and reconciliation for the betterment of both the organisation and the workers (Osad and Osas, 2013:45). Accordingly, Kazimoto (2013), stressed that workplace conflict is the presence of discord that occurs when different individuals or groups' goals, interests, or values are incompatible and frustrate each other's attempts to achieve objectives in an organization. It is a communication process

and an inevitable consequence of transactional relationships manifesting in disagreement and dissonance with and between individuals and groups in the work environment. In this context, workplace conflict is a fact of life in any organization as long as people compete for jobs, power, recognition and security (Adomie and Anie, 2005:61). Although, Akanji (2005) argued that managed conflict promotes productive performance, while destructively managed conflict creates dislocation and polarization of the entire group, reducing productivity and job performance. In this vein, Olonade, et al. (2021) suggests that effectively managed conflicts encourage organizational improvement to boost employees' performance at work. Furthermore, through good conflict management strategies, weaknesses in organizational decision-making are exposed, which may prompt the establishment to effect changes and search for positive solutions. Hence, management is duty-bound to resolve a conflict correctly for the sake of increasing employee involvement because the outcome of such action will result in good communication, time management, good cooperation, and increased corporate productivity (Obasan, 2011:45).

It is on the premise of the foregoing analysis that the study examines the organizational context of Nigeria Custom Service, NCS in view to establish peculiarity of its conflict occurrences and process deployed for its management. In this regard, the analysis of this discourse is organized in this introduction, statement of problem, research questions, objectives of the study, literature review, empirical review, methodology, data presentation and analysis, conclusion and recommendations.

### 1.1 Statement of problem

Basically, Nigerian public service is beleaguered with bribery and corruption, attitudinal problem, inefficiency, economic sabotage, nepotism and favoritism, disrespect for law and order, parochialism and others which list are inexhaustive. The Nigerian Customs Service as a subset of the public service is not immune either, this account for why there is instances of violations of procedures, indiscipline and promotion of mediocrity instead of meritocracy. This has also resulted into lack of commitment of personnel to the goals and objectives of the service, insufficient delegation of authority by some senior officers have also affected the organization effectiveness (Idris and Alegbeleye, 2015: 89). In a similar perspective, Otodo (2018) stressed that it appears that most public and private organizations in Nigeria including Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) are facing this problem of indiscipline. This indiscipline comes in various forms such as absenteeism, carefree attitude at work, late coming to the office, leaving the office before the closing hours, lack of dedication, stealing of government properties, insubordination, loitering, and animosity, the list are inexhaustible.

A cursory review of the scholarly observations indeed underlines the reasons for organizational conflicts. As Eketete (2019) revealed that Nigeria Custom Service by nature of its service on several occasions dragged into series of conflicts that affects negatively the image of the paramilitary institution. This is common and observed in virtually all its commands across the federation. However, (Ozkalp, et al, 2009, cited in Osisioma, et al., 2012:2) opined that conflict is inevitable in organizations because organizations function by means of adjustments and compromises among competitive elements in their structure and membership. In the organizational context, conflict can be normal and healthy, as absolute lack of tension is ultimately dull and stagnant, and unlikely to foster creativity and growth. Conflict arises when there is a change in situations where change is seen as a threat to be challenged or resisted. Where the change process is frustrated, this may produce an aggressive reaction—fight rather than flight. Conflict is not to be deplored; it is an inevitable consequence of progress and change, and it can be used constructively (Armstrong, 2005:34). The productivity of conflict arises from the fact that conflict can lead to change, change can lead to adaptation, and adaptation can lead to survival and even prosperity (Darling and Walker, 2001: 231; Walton, 1976:5-7). The fact that conflict is a normal part of organizational life is recognized by most management authors and that is why organizations must plan for it so that when it does arise, they will be prepared for it.

Adversely, it is also argued that conflicts in organizations have destabilizing effects on the overall performance of the organization. It leads to underperformance since valuable time and resources (human and material) are used to control and manage conflicts rather than enhance effectiveness and involvement. Conflicts also lead to interpersonal disharmony in the organization, achieving organizational goals more difficult. Attaining organizational involvement and effectiveness is possible if efforts are always made to reduce the overall level of conflict within the organization (Olonade, et al., 2021:54). This is because conflicts are instruments of distraction and distortion. Thus, it shift energy and industry of the personnel from productive ideas and drive to needless quarrels, unhealthy competitions and squabbles which undermines broad objectives and specific targets of an institution (Lawson, 2018:34).

The peculiarity and context of work conflict is also a factor of consideration. It has been argued that the nature and roles of an organization determines to a large extent the various forms of conflicts it attempt to resolve among its personnel or staff. That is to say those organizational conflicts occur in various forms because statutory contexts and function differs. What is peculiar to A organization may not be witnessed or seen in B organization (Igwebuike, 2020:34). In other words, the foregoing narrative elicits curiosity in nature and peculiarity of conflicts in Nigeria Custom Service and most importantly mechanisms and procedures initiated to resolve these conflicts towards improving organizational performance. This is in cognizance of the fact that conflict is inevitable.

## 1.2 Research questions

From the issues raised in the statement of problem, this study therefore sought to examine the following research questions:

1. What are the factors responsible for conflicts in Nigeria Custom Service?
2. What are the effects of these conflicts in Nigeria Custom Service?
3. What are the conflict management procedures in Nigeria Custom Service?
4. What is the assessment of these conflict management procedures in Nigeria Custom Service?

## 1.3 Objectives of the study

The broad objective of the study is aimed to examine conflict and conflict management processes in Nigeria Custom Service. Thus, the specific objectives of the study are obvious under the following:

1. To establish peculiarity of conflicts in Nigeria Custom Service.
2. To identify factors responsible for these conflicts in Nigeria Custom Service.
3. To illuminate effects of these conflicts in Nigeria Custom Service.
4. To find out how these conflicts were managed in Nigeria Custom Service.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

As a social science concept, conflict is replete with diverse definitions and interpretations among scholars. Accordingly, Oyedolapo (2010) defined conflict as contradiction arising from differences in interests, ideas, ideologies, orientations, beliefs, perceptions and tendencies. Conflict is a normal, natural and inevitable phenomenon in any interactive situation of human life. This is because contradictions exist at all levels of the society. Also conflict occurs in intra-psychic/personal, interpersonal, intra-groups, inter-group, institution, intra-national and international. Conflict is not necessarily negative in itself. It is often a by-product of social change and may lead to constructive transformation. In a broad perspective, the word 'conflict' is a concept synonymous with human behaviours. Since man cannot exist in isolation, then in the course of interactions with other members of the community there will be disagreements, intrigues and misunderstanding. The disagreement or misunderstanding occurs in forms of revolution or war. The reasons for the conflict may be as a result of cheating or struggle for a beneficial goal. To make peace or put an end to the conflicts, various measures are adopted by both parties and intervening parties to reach an agreement or compromise. In understanding the meaning of conflict, it must be seen from the perspective of inter-group relations whether as individuals or groups (Olaniyi, 2009:2). Furthermore, different management theorists and writers have attempted to define conflict from different perspectives. It has been variously defined as "a breakdown in standard mechanisms of decision making" thus trying the concept to decision making (March and Simon, 1958, cited in Nair, 2007:360). Again, other scholars defined conflict from the perspective of incompatibilities in goals. The focus would later change to disagreements on ends or goals; incompatibilities in means or views; perceived differences in interests, views or goals; opposing interests involving scarce resources and goal divergence; and a cognitive bargaining process (Walton and Dutton, 1999; Jehn, 1997; Kolb and Putnam, 1992, cited in Nair, 2007).

In descriptive view of conflict, Aderibigbe (2010) argued that conflict is ubiquitous and normal part of social living. Conflicts can be small or large, obvious or hidden, and brief or long lasting. They occur internationally, nationally, and locally. Although, conflicts are pervasive and inevitable in social relations, people can approach conflict constructively as well as destructively. When approached constructively and cooperatively, conflicts can surface important issues and challenge injustice. Conflicts do not invariably lead to violence (Opotow, 2000: 3). Even when cooperative processes fail, people can still voice their concerns through individual or collective opposition, protest, and nonviolent non-cooperation (Sharp, 1973 cited in Aderibigbe, 2010:11). The foregoing descriptive analysis therefore elicits a fundamental question on what is or are responsible for conflicts? In the view of Adekanye (2003), the root causes of conflicts in Africa can be categorized into what are described as "background/structural cum predisposition conditions," "precipitant", "accelerators or triggers". The "structural cum predispositional conditions" as stated "encompasses (among others) such things as the colonially imposed, artificial boundaries, the configuration of given society including the differences between groups as regards language, culture, religion, class and social organization..." (cited in Aiyede, 2006: 127). In apt sense, work place conflicts are caused when rules and precedents are jettisoned by prejudices and when personnel involved in competition for personal gains contrary to institutional procedures and rules (Okenyi 2016: 45).

Succinctly, Olaniyi (2009) remarked that conflict exists when two persons wish to carry out acts that are mutually inconsistent. They will want to do the same thing or do different things that are incompatible. It can involve more than two parties. Conflict is a negation which is anchored on behavioural norms. It is a negative or over-reaction to situation, idea, principles and other forms of behaviour. Once, there is the cause for inter-group relations, conflict becomes inevitable and peace must be given a chance. Hence, conflict could be seen as a natural phenomenon which must occur among human beings.

In other words, conflicts are inevitable despite its context and forms of occurrences. To this extent, this scenario therefore elicits the need for conflict management. To manage conflict or conflict management is a concept that is replete

with plethora of definitions among scholars. Precisely, conflict management refers to the long-term management of intractable conflicts involving institutionalized provisions and regulative procedures for dealing with conflicts whenever they occur. It describes the way we respond to and deal with conflicts before, during and after it has occurred. It is the label for the variety of ways by which people handle grievances—standing up for what they consider to be right and against what they consider to be wrong. Briefly stated, conflict management is about using managerial tactics to contain a conflict, to put a lid on it, and control the environment. Conflict management is often considered to be distinct from conflict resolution. Because many conflicts cannot be really resolved, we use the term conflict management rather than conflict resolution. Good conflict management enables parties to co-exist amicably and deal with their disputes without necessarily resolving the underlying conflict. For example, we may never be able to resolve the various conflicts among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria (Amumah, 2010:36). In this vein, Aiyede (2006) therefore viewed conflict management as a part of a larger process of ensuring that man lives in peace and in an orderly way. Conflict should also be channeled towards positive effect in every human community. Conflict management is another way of controlling conflict before or during and after it has occurred.

In a different perspective, Otite and Albert (1999), asserted that conflict management is more elaborate and wider in conception and application, when necessitated; it involves conflict resolution and transformation. It is more of a long-term arrangement involving institutionalized provisions and regulative procedures for dealing with conflicts wherever they occur.' This view of the comprehensiveness and institutionalisation involved in conflict management is further stressed by Zartman (1989), when he wrote that 'conflict management' refers to the elimination or neutralisation of conflict from erupting into crises or to cool a crisis in eruption'. Subsequently, conflict management is a procedural process aimed at resolving conflicts between parties. It is therefore characterized with procedures and steps in managing conflicts between individuals and groups involved in conflicts (Egbogu, 2002:131). This assertion therefore illuminates the importance of conflict management strategies. Accordingly, Olonade, et al. (2021), noted that conflict management strategies refer to those techniques or approaches that can be used to prevent, control, or resolve conflicts. Conflict management strategies are essential for any institution because, through these strategies, the adverse effects resulting from conflicts can be minimized or controlled. There exist several strategies that could be used to resolve conflicts in institutions. These include dominance, compromise, synergy, the culture of civility, win-lose strategy, lose-lose strategy, win-win strategy (Anashie and Kulo, 2014:169). From this indication, Ihuarulam, (2015) stressed that adjudication, collective bargaining, confrontation, problem-solving, creation of the budget committee, separation device, neglect or silence, clarification of interdependencies, consultation, boxing the problem, clarification of goals, and prayer are elements of conflict management strategies.

Furthermore, it has been argued that the timely identification of the nature and significance of sources of conflicts in an organisation is the significant step in developing conflict management strategies (Elmagri and Eaton, 2011:31). The best technique for managing conflicts in an organisation is to focus on enhancing constructive functions to employee involvement. Therefore, it is essential to identify all levels of conflict in an organization in reference to individual, interpersonal or intergroup conflicts. It is also important to bear in mind that every organisation has its technique of managing conflict with the sole aim of survival (Olonade, et al., 2021:55). Uchendu, et al. (2013) argued that since conflict is unavoidable in organisations, management determines whether it positively or negatively affects employee involvement. Therefore, proper recognition and immediate clarification of the underlying tension before the conflict ensues or escalates translates to effective management of conflict in an organization.

In etymological sense, some of the early scholars who took interest in conflict and conflict management strategies include Follett (1926-1940), Blake and Mouton (1964), Thomas (1976), (Follett, as cited in Tabitha and Florence 2019: 32), proposed three main strategies for managing interpersonal conflicts: dominance, compromise, and integration, as well as alternative dispute resolution and suppression strategies for organisations. Blake and Mouton, as cited in Tabitha and Florence (2019), categorizing their strategies based on the level of concerns for individuals and production, assert that interpersonal conflicts can be managed through five strategies: forcing, compromising, withdrawing, problem-solving, and smoothing.

Explicitly, Tabitha and Florence (2019) assert that a two-dimensional framework of conflict handling strategies based on the assertiveness and cooperativeness of the parties concerned. He acknowledged five conflict management strategies: competing, compromising, collaborating, accommodating, and alternative dispute resolution. As cited by Tabitha and Florence (2019), Rahim posits that interpersonal conflict can be managed through five strategies: dominating, obliging, integrating, compromising, and avoiding, based on the level of the concerned individuals. All the scholars mentioned in this study agreed on using compromise as one of the strategies for conflict management. However, there is a considerable similarity between Thomas and Rahim strategies; no wonder even in contemporary studies, administrators have extensively applied their conflict management strategies (Daly et al., 2010:43).

Subsequently, Olonade, et al. (2021) argued that some essential strategies for organisational conflict management are collaboration, competition, bargaining, alternative dispute resolution, and compromising. A collaboration strategy aims to satisfy the needs of the parties concerned, especially when the members have mutually significant goals. Competition

strategy refers to an individual or group's desire to meet their goals and objectives either moderately or to other groups' detriment. In an organisation, individuals and groups compete for scarce resources, position, recognition and power. Accordingly, Issa (2009), opined that a very competitive individual's use of power can only be reduced through higher external power, such as legitimate law or social taboos, when going overboard. The bargaining strategy is used primarily on a contractual agreement between management and employees for settlement when it becomes a legal matter (Fajana and Shadare, 2012:34).

Subsequently, Hellriegel (2010), defined conflict management as the interventions designed to reduce conflict, or in some instances, to increase insufficient conflict. It is a process whereby managers design plans, and implement policies and procedures to ensure that conflict situations are resolved effectively. Hence, Knippen, et al. (2011), asserted that conflict management broadens understanding of the problem, increases the resolutions and tend to work towards consensus and to seek a genuine commitment to decision making. Since there is a broader, stronger element of disagreement and discord within the conflict process, a considerable amount of mental and psychological energy is generated. The ability to divert this energy into productive achievement for both parties involved in the conflict can result in the conversion of conflict into a joint finding and problem solving solution (Prentice, 2006: 27). Invariably, Blake and Mouton (2009), accept that the most important aspect of a successful conflict management is the attempt to shift the behavioral and attitudinal components of a relationship from a competitive to a cooperative orientation. It is, however, suggested that both the common enemy and the super ordinate goal approaches fall short of the need to achieve a genuine conflict resolution. This is because both can be seen as being mainly temporary in character, both are primarily defensive and both strategies may widen a conflict by externalizing it (Poole, 2009). Blake and Mouton (2009), offer an approach which emphasizes consultation- based interventions, openness of communication, greater participation in decision-making and problem-solving interactions. Conflict management strategies are important in every organization in order to generate creative thinking and to establish a problem-solving attitude (Sanda, 2008: 23).

Moreover, effective conflict management is quite a major undertaking because there are not too many guideposts to indicate how to move towards conflict resolution. It is, therefore, a task which demands attention to attitudinal and behavioral elements, to outcome and emotional needs and to interpersonal as well as interdepartmental requirements. The institutionalization of interaction of information, skills, values and situation consists of four steps (Ekong, 2013:43). Furthermore, Ekong (2013), stressed that the first step is bringing in the consultant which represents an administrative response for effective conflict management. The second step is associated with various information-giving activities. The third step is aimed at attitudinal change through data-feedback, team-training, sensitivity and T-Group training or Grid development. The final step involves a structural change in the relationship between departments and a move towards integrative interactions and conflict resolution.

Again, Nair (2007) discusses the approach and avoidance modes of conflict management. The approach mode includes such strategies as confrontation, compromise, arbitration and negotiation, while avoidance styles include resignation, withdrawal, buying time or appeasement. (Kolb and Putnam 1992:315; cited by Nair, 2007) summarize the basic forms of conflict management as:

- Self-help which includes force and vengeance;
- Avoidance which involves withdrawing from the relationship;
- Lumping, that is, tolerating the situation without public comment;
- Negotiation – trying to find a common ground among parties in conflict;
- Third party mediation, arbitration and/or adjudication.

Brett (2004) also offers a three-part model to conflict management: structural and procedural channeling, the use of negotiation skills, and the use of third parties. Structural channeling implies the application of organizational redesign using mechanisms such as liaisons, task forces, teams, matrix designs, and so on. Negotiations could involve bargaining behaviours, concessions and tactics. And tactics have been described as attempts to influence the opponent's perceptions via argumentation with the intention of changing the other party's perception of power (Nair, 2007:363). Hence, conflict management process is significant to institutional or organizational performance. Thus, the foregoing scholarly analyses obviously established that conflict management strategies are instructive in institutions and organizations. And, Nigeria Custom Service represents one of such formal organization.

The Nigeria Custom Service of any country means a lot to it. Its ancillary function as a security watchdog helps to prevent harmful products like arms from being brought into the country, in addition to preventing smuggling in either banned goods for the protection of cottage industry or barring unscrupulous people from bringing in goods without paying stipulated duties. Above all, it is the constitutional function of generating revenue to the nation that the Nigeria Customs Service derives its significance (Idris and Alegbeleye 2015:89). The Nigeria Custom Service is a para-military institution whose constitutional responsibility is provided in the constitution.

In a board perspective, Ibrahim (2012), document that the Nigeria Customs Service, NCS came into being in 1891 and was saddled with the responsibility of revenue collection, accounting for the revenue collected and anti-smuggling

activities. Today, the NCS has such other functions as implementation of government fiscal measures, generation of statistical data for planning purposes, trade facilitation, implementation of bilateral and multilateral agreements entered into by government, collection of levies and charges and collaborative functions with government agencies such as the CBN, Nigeria Police, NDLEA, SON, NAFDAC, FIRS etc. These are further to the roles of combating illegal commercial activities and trades in illicit goods, infraction on intellectual property rights, illegal international trades in endangered species, illegal trades in arms and ammunitions, money laundering, trafficking of illicit drugs, illegal trading of cultural artifacts and importations of pornographic materials, toxic, hazardous and such other dangerous materials or substances.

In a historical sense, Onyenma and Ekweozor, (2020) stressed that what is now known as the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) – a paramilitary organization, could be said to have been established a little over a century ago, when the British colonial administration appointed Mr. T.A, Wall, in 1891, as the Director General of Customs for collection of inland revenue in Niger Coast protectorate. This is the formalization of the duties, which the department had been performing under the Royal Niger Company under the leadership of the past executives. The name Department of Customs and Excise emerged in 1922 when the first controller of Customs and Excise of federal republic of Nigeria was appointed. Towards the end of 1945, the Customs and Excise preventive service was established under the leadership of Mr. Nicol Briton. This was made up of two divisions - maritime and preventive. The maritime division had the responsibility of collecting import and Excise duties and related function while the preventive division was responsible for enforcement duties, which included prevention of smuggling as well as arrest and prosecution of smugglers. Sequel to the promulgation of the Customs and Excise and management (CEMA) No.55 of 1958 the affairs of the department were brought under management of board. In 1992, the department of Customs and Excise was transferred from ministry of interior back to ministry of finance and in addition, its status as a para-military organization was recognized. It is now known as Nigeria Customs Services. There is an appropriate alignment of salary grade levels and a re-structuring with what obtains in the Nigeria Police Force. A new board headed by the Honorable Minister of Finance was also re-constituted. The Comptroller General was assisted by (6) six Deputy- Comptroller Generals, heading the Departments; a. Finance, Administration and Technical; b. Tariff and Trade; c. Strategic Research and Policy; d. Investigation and Inspection; e. Human Resource Development and f. Excise and Industrial Incentives.

Succinctly, Nigeria Custom Service bulletin (2020) documents that Nigeria Custom Service is headed by Comptroller General and assisted by six Deputy Comptroller-Generals heading the Departments as follows:

- Finance, Administration and Technical Service
- Tariff and Trade
- Enforcement, Investigation and Inspection
- Strategic Research and Policy
- Human Resource Development
- Excise and Industrial Incentives.

These Deputy Comptroller Generals have assistant Comptroller-Generals heading each division under them while comptrollers runs the affairs of each units under these divisions. ACG (Headquarters) reports directly to the Comptroller-General along with the heads of some units in addition to four Assistant Comptroller-Generals (ACG) in the zones that coordinate the area commands under their respective jurisdictions. As regards, the command structure of Nigeria Custom Service:

**Table 1.** The Zonal Structure of Nigeria Custom Service

Zones	Area Command
Zone A	1.Apapa 2.Tin-Can Island 3. Murtala Mohammed International Airport. 4. Kirikiri Lighten Terminal. 5. Lilypond 6. Lagos Industrial 7.Ogun 8.Oyo/Osun 9.Ondo/Ekiti
Zone B	1.Kaduna/Katsina 2.Kano/Jigawa 3.Sokoto/Kebbi 4.Zamara 5.Niger/Kwara 6.Kogi 7.FCT

Zone C	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Anambra/Ebonyi/Enugu</li> <li>2. Imo/Abia</li> <li>3. PH 1/ Bayelsa</li> <li>4. PH 2-Ome</li> <li>5. Edo/Delta</li> <li>6. Cross River/Akwa Ibom</li> </ol>
Zone D	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bauchi/Gombe</li> <li>2. Borno/Yobe</li> <li>3. Adamawa/Taraba</li> <li>4. Benue/Plateau</li> <li>5. Nasarawa</li> </ol>

Source: Nigeria Custom Service Bulletin, 2020:4.

As regards public perception of Nigeria Custom Service, Idris and Alegbeleye, (2015) noted that the service has over the years undergone series of reforms in order to change the face of the organization to meet international best practice. It is incontrovertible to indicate that the Nigerian public often sees the Customs service as a hotbed for corruption and lassitude. Most of the young men and women being recruited into the organization came with the aim to make money because of the parochial believe that custom personnel is sure way to become rich. This is the reason why most of these erring officers have been dismissed from the service prematurely. One of the guiding principles of any organization which bears arm is “discipline” and the Nigeria Customs as a paramilitary agency is not exceptional. Discipline of its officers is very central and essential for its day-to-day operation if it must achieve its objective by contributing to the socio-economic development of the country. Similarly, Buba (2007) remarked that there were daunting challenges militating against performance of the Nigerian Customs Services. These challenges were presentation of ill-prepared and improper cargo manifest to the Nigeria Customs Service by ship /aircraft captain and their representatives, lack of modernization and cooperation among other government agencies, which thwarts efforts to deal effectively with increased trade flows, attitudes of officers, men of the service and major stakeholders to adjust to reforms and taste of Nigeria for foreign goods.

Subsequently, Ibekwe (2017) revealed that customs operations at the country’s ports remain riddled with corruption and inefficiency. Also, due to broken and non-existing equipment such as scanners required for examination of imported goods, officers deployed to man this equipment now waste away in redundancy. For instance, steel doors are heavy, so you check a few, three or four in containers out of twenty. The importer might have ten of those containers then he will drop two for examination and the remaining eight you declared that you have seen them. That is the standard practice. You only tell the agent what he could give you (bribe) and you write that you have examined all, especially for people that bring in heavy goods like tiles and water closets. All these vices as embellished diminished the image and value of Nigeria Custom Service. However, the literature reviewed does not show trends of conflict occurrences and conflict management processes in Nigeria Custom Service.

### 3. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

A plethora of studies have been carried out in different climes and settings to verify the conflict handling strategies of managers in different types of organizations (Osisioma, et al., 2012:4). In this regard, Obasan (2011) assessed the impact of conflict management on employee’s performance in the banking sector, using First Bank Plc Lagos branch as a case study and a student distribution index to test the significance of response. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the bank of choice and a self-design questionnaire was administered to 50 respondents cutting across all cadres of staff of First Bank of Nigeria Plc (Lagos Branch). The study revealed that the main sources of conflict in the organization relate to perception and value problems and also that high employee’s morale leads to improved employees’ performance if conflict is managed effectively. That is, there is a significant relationship between conflict management and employee’s performance. As regards conflict management strategies, Ma’ Z (2007), used three simulated business negotiations, to explore the nature of conflict management styles in China, and to examine the effects of different styles on the negotiation process and outcomes. The conflict management styles were measured with the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, and the negotiation process and outcomes were assessed by a variety of methods. Results showed that compromising and avoiding are the most preferred methods of conflict management in China, while accommodating and competing lead to more satisfaction during business negotiation. Furthermore, Ozkalp, et al (2009) studied the conflict management styles of 130 Turkish managers, with the aim of determining their conflict styles in different sectors namely durable consumer goods, aviation, automotive and banking. The study found that first, integrating, and second, compromising, were the most preferred conflict management styles of Turkish managers. The other important finding is that preferring obliging styles of conflict management changes according to the status of the managers. Obliging is mostly used when the conflict partner has an upper-level status.

In another study, Darling and Walker (2001) applied the behavioural style paradigm as a tool to manage conflict effectively, using an actual case as a point of study. Using the two dimensions of interactive behaviour-assertiveness and responsiveness-the researchers defined four behavioural styles in conflict handling: the Relater, the Analyzer, the Director and the Socializer. Relaters combine higher-than-average responsiveness with a comparatively low level of assertiveness, while Analyzers combine a low level of emotional responsiveness and a low level of assertiveness. The Directors on the other hand, blend a low level of emotional responsiveness with a relatively high degree of assertiveness, while the Socialisers integrate high levels of both emotional responsiveness and assertiveness. The study concludes that effective management teams are made up of all four types of individuals, and the most productive management team in a firm will usually have a balance of individuals who reflect each behavioural style. The close inter-dependency between units in the Library was also identified as a source of friction among staff. The study provided evidence for the effectiveness of managing conflict through prevention, by means of improved communication, and argued for a pro-active approach to handling conflict. In India, Zahid (2017) conducted a study on the impact of organisational conflict on employee's performance in the private commercial banks of Bangladesh. The study examined the antecedents of organisational conflict and the circumstances under which organisational conflict affects employee performance. The study revealed that conflict hinders the performance of employees in an organisation.

In another study, Owan (2018) investigated conflict management strategies and secondary school teachers' job involvement. Six null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The study adopted correlational and factorial research designs. According to the findings, the level of job involvement of teachers in the Obubra Local Government Area is significantly high. The findings also revealed that the four conflict resolution strategies (arbitration, dialogue, effective communication, and smoothing) had a significant combined influence on secondary school teachers' job involvement. It was based on this background that this study was considered pertinent to carry out. Also, Adeniran and Adeniyi (2018) discussed issues beyond leadership control in managing conflict in the Nigerian university system. To effectively examine conflict management, this study adopts desk research using mainly secondary data from textbooks, the internet, journals etc. The study uncovers that conflict is prevalent in human life and can not be removed. Instead, its effect can be reduced to ensure that it does not impede the organisation's activities and reduce employees' job performance.

In a different perspective, Longe (2018) reported that empirical tests showed a significant positive relationship between conflict management strategies (collective bargaining, compromise, and accommodation) and organisational performance. Conversely, non-integrative conflict management strategies (competition, domination, and alternative dispute resolution) had a negative statistically determinate effect on organisational performance. Also, the result of the regression analysis indicated that collective bargaining strategy displayed the highest significant positive correlation with organisational performance. Furthermore, study findings showed that conflicts arise in the workplace over various organisational experiences based on economic and goal-incompatible orientations. Basically, Mba (2013), investigated conflict management and employees' performance in Julius Berger Nigeria Plc, Bonny Island. A descriptive research design was used in executing the study using 50 purposively selected sample respondents consisting of 25 managerial employees and 25 non-managerial employees of Julius Berger Nigeria Plc, Bonny Island. The core aspect of the study is the use of cross sectional survey research design in generating the required primary data. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results from the data analysis indicated that significant relationship exists between conflict management strategies and employees' performance and no differences exist between managerial and non-managerial employees' perception of the effectiveness of conflict management strategies.

In conclusive sense, Henry (2009), investigated conflict management and its effects on employees performance using convenience sample of one hundred and thirty managers (130) selected from government departments, parastatals and private companies. The analysis of data was made by using quantitative approach. The data was analyzed using descriptive method, one hundred and thirty (130) questionnaire were distributed to managers in government departments, parastatals and private companies in Gaborone. Only 85 questionnaires were returned by the respondents which accounts to 65.4%. The remaining was not returned or was misplaced by the respondents and accounted to 34.67%. The tabular method was used to analyze the data. The findings indicate that the major cause of organizational conflict is limited resources and that there is no significant relationship between conflict management and employees' performance. Basically, the empirical study showed various forms and occurrences of conflict in different organizations and institutions. Most importantly, different conflict management strategies deployed to handle or manage these conflicts. However, none of these empirical studies examined peculiarity of conflicts and conflict management strategies often used to resolve conflicts among personnel of Nigeria Custom Service to underscore gap in literature. Hence, the four research questions established were not examined as regards, what conflicts are peculiar to Nigeria Custom Service? What are the factors responsible for these conflicts in Nigeria Custom Service? Also the effects of these conflicts in Nigeria Custom Service and how were these conflicts managed in Nigeria Custom Service? These critical questions which form the thrust of this discourse to underscore the purpose of analysis, generalization and recommendations through survey study.



4. METHODOLOGY

Research design of this study is a survey design. It is appropriate and suitable for this study particularly with reference to the conflicts and conflict management strategies in Nigeria Custom Service. The area of study is Nigeria Custom Service. Particularly, the research survey focused on four locations in the zonal structure of Nigeria Custom Service, (Apapa in Zone A, Kogi in Zone B, Enugu in Zone C and Nassarawa in Zone D). The population of this study stretch across personnel of Nigeria Custom Service, clearing agents, and traders. The researchers established or targeted respondent population figure of over 1000. However, the researchers decided to limit the figure to 900 respondents. Subsequently, random stratified sampling technique was adopted to underscore the imperative of differentiations of zonal commands, custom personnel and non-personnel of Nigeria Custom Service, NCS. From this technique, the researchers reached a sample size of 430 respondents. As regards to data collection, a questionnaire instrument was designed to collect data from the sample size of 430 respondents. Also, data from secondary sources of text books, articles and reports were also useful for this study and analysis. Data were to be analyzed using the four likert rating scale. Likert rating scale assigned numerical values according to the strength and weakness of the opinion of the respondents in the following order:

- Strongly agree - 4 points
- Agree - 3 points
- Disagree - 2 points
- Strongly disagree - 1 points

The decision for the acceptance or rejection of the questionnaire item is the calculated mean of 2.5. The questionnaire item is accepted when it is within or above 2.5 and is rejected when it is less than 2.5. The researcher equally employed the cumulative grand mean to determine the strength or weakness of the general opinion of the respondents.

5. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

**Research Question 1:** What are the factors responsible for conflicts in Nigeria Custom Service?

**Table 2.** Mean rating responses on the factors responsible for conflicts in Nigeria Custom Service.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	X	Decision
1	Infractions and abuse of precedence in staff promotion and incentives.	3.8	Accepted
2	Public pressure to impress relatives and cronies in flagrant violation of work procedure.	3.5	Accepted
3	Attitudinal issues of envy, dominance, greed etc.	3.6	Accepted
4	Managerial laxity in the enforcement of disciplinary measures against erring personnel.	3.2	Accepted
5	Nepotism and favouritism.	3.9	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

$$\text{Grand Mean } \sum \frac{x}{n} = \frac{3.8 + 3.5 + 3.6 + 3.2 + 3.9}{5} = \frac{18}{5} = 3.6$$

**Research Question 2:** What are the effects of these conflicts in Nigeria Custom Service?

**Table 3.** Mean rating responses on the effects of these conflicts in Nigeria Custom Service.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	X	Decision
1	It undermines professionalism and performance.	3.6	Accepted
2	It polarizes and entrench divisive interests among personnel and officers.	3.7	Accepted
3	It create avenue for unhealthy competition and tussle among staff.	3.8	Accepted
4	It militate against productivity and leads to loss of revenue.	3.5	Accepted
5	It has stimulated the need for reforms.	3.9	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

$$\text{Grand Mean } \sum \frac{x}{n} = \frac{3.6 + 3.7 + 3.8 + 3.5 + 3.9}{5} = \frac{18.5}{5} = 3.7$$

**Research Question 3:** How were these conflicts managed in Nigeria Custom Service?

**Table 5.** Mean rating responses on the procedures of conflict management in Nigeria Custom Service.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	X	Decision
1	Investigation and queries.	3.7	Accepted
2	Orderly Room Trial.	4.1	Accepted
3	Interdiction and suspension.	3.9	Accepted
4	Compulsory retirement.	2.1	Rejected

5 Dismal. 2.1 Rejected

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

$$\text{Grand Mean } \sum \frac{x}{n} = \frac{3.7 + 4.1 + 3.9 + 2.1 + 2.1}{5} = \frac{15.9}{5} = 3.2$$

**Research Question 4:** What is the assessment of these procedures of conflict management in Nigeria Custom Service?

**Table 6.** Mean rating responses on the assessment of these procedures of conflict management in Nigeria Custom Service.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	X	Decision
1.	These procedures are efficiently deployed to manage conflicts.	2.1	Rejected
2.	These procedures have ensured strict adherence to rules and precedence among personnel.	2.0	Rejected
3.	These procedures are vulnerable to abuses and manipulation.	3.8	Accepted
4.	These procedures have entrenched harmonious working relation and environment among personnel.	2.3	Rejected
5.	These procedures motivated personnel to optimal performance and productivity.	2.0	Rejected

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

$$\text{Grand Mean } \sum \frac{x}{n} = \frac{2.1 + 2.0 + 3.8 + 2.3 + 2.0}{5} = \frac{12.2}{5} = 2.4.$$

Figure 1 revealed that the five questionnaire items which reflect factors responsible for conflicts among personnel in Nigeria Custom Service elicited mean rating score above 2.5 and grand mean of 3.6. The same trend is also observed in the second research question which indicated that the respondents affirmed that items identified showed that there effects which are however adverse to productivity and performance and most importantly, the rationale for reform with a grand mean score of 3.8 as seen in Figure 2. Furthermore, Figure 3. illuminated several conflict management strategies deployed in Nigeria Custom Service, NSC. As indicated, 3 questionnaire items(1, 2 and 3) displayed recorded mean score rating above 2.5 where 2 questionnaire items (4 and 5) showed mean rating score below 2.1 respectively. Impliedly, it is therefore argued that compulsory retirement and dismal cannot be adjudged as conflict management strategies rather severe sanctions against erring officers and men of the Service. The grand mean score of 3.2 further indicated that all items postulated in the questionnaire instrument cannot be seen strategies in conflict management. Figure 4 also displayed five questionnaire items which recorded mean rating score below 2.5 except questionnaire item 3 which recorded a mean rating score above 2.5. A cursory view of the responses calculated in statistical mean implied that assessment of conflict management strategies deployed have failed to ensure strict compliance to rules and precedents, not free from abuses, failed to entrench harmony and motivate personnel for optimal performance and productivity. The grand mean of 2.4 of the assessment of these responses invariably implied that the conflict management strategies deployed are immersed in irregularities.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Nigeria Custom Service is a very important statutory institution of Nigeria state. And, it is not immune from conflicts, however, the procedure and techniques initiated to manage this recurring reality (conflict) becomes expedient in view of its imperatives on psychological and emotional disposition of personnel towards official duties. From the conceptual and empirical analysis, organizational or institutional conflicts are not uncommon where different approaches or procedures have been deployed to ensure harmony among staff for purpose of productive performance. Most importantly, there are peculiarity of these conflicts and conflict management strategies which stem from the organizational character, statutory task and nature of relations among personnel. Thus, Nigeria Custom Service is regimented institution with its peculiarities and drive. The findings as embellished in the subtitle of data presentation and analysis revealed as factors responsible for conflicts and its effects among personnel of Nigeria Custom Service. It further displayed measures initiated in conflict management which unfortunately have not yielded positive indications as revealed for harmony and optimal performance. These indications therefore accentuate the need for reforms as outlined in the recommendations below:

1. Conflicts among personnel and personnel and members of the public should be taken seriously to ensure compliance to precedents of the Service and discipline.
2. Beyond Orderly Room trials, there should be effective centralized and decentralized conflict management mechanisms at various command structures at national and zonal levels to lend values of discipline, professionalism and orderliness in the course of discharging duties as individuals and collectives.

3. The management of the Service should deploy measures of conflict prevention by ensuring professional standards in rewards, incentives and promotion to avert unnecessary altercations and tussle among personnel and senior and junior staff.
4. Periodic in-House capacity training for personnel on “emotional management”, “anger management” and “pressure preventive measures” in the course of discharging their statutory task.
5. The personnel in conflict management mechanism of Nigeria Custom Service should also avail themselves to “capacity-building seminars” on effective techniques to be deployed in managing conflicts among personnel.
6. There is need for the management to explore and initiate other conflict management measures (after a pilot study) beyond the conventional regimented measures for purpose of harmony and productivity.

It is therefore anticipated that effective and efficient deployment of these measures advocated will certainly strengthen mechanism and process of conflict management in Nigeria Custom Service for optimal performance.

## 7. REFERENCES

- Aderibigbe, A(2010). *Theories of Peace Education and Conflict*. Abuja: National Open University of Nigeria.
- Adomi E. E. & Anie S. O. (2006). Conflict Management in Nigeria University Libraries. *Journal of Library Management, Vol. 27, No. 8, pp. 520- 533*.
- Aiyede, R (2006). *Theories in Conflict Management*. Abuja: National Open University of Nigeria.
- Akanji, I (2005). *Perspectives in Work Place Conflict Management and New Approach for Twenty-First Century in* Albert, I (eds). *Perspective on Peace and Conflict in Africa: Essay in Honour of Gen. Abdusalam Abubakar*. Ibadan: John Archer Publishers.
- Anumah (2010). *Conflict Management*. Abuja: National Open University of Nigeria.
- Brett J. M. (1984). Managing organizational conflict. *Journal Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, Vol. 15 No. 5, pp. 664-78*.
- Buba, J (2007). *The Role of the Customs Reform in Boosting Non-oil Revenue in Nigeria*. University of Nigeria: Symposium.
- Daly, T; Lee, J; Soutar, G and Ramsi, S (2016). Conflict-Handling Style Measurement: A Best Worst Application. *International Journal of Conflict Management, Vol 19(10)*.
- Darling J. R. and Fogliasso C. (1999). Conflict Management across Cultural Boundaries: A Case Analysis from a Multi-National Bank. *European Business Review, Vol. 99, pp. 383-392*.
- Darling J. R. and Walker W. E. (2001), “Effective Conflict Management: Use of the Behavioural Style Model. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal, pp.230-242*.
- Deutsch, M (1973). *The Resolution of Conflict*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Elmagri, M and Eaton, D (2011), *Identifying the Factors Causing Interpersonal Conflict in Organisation*. New Delhi: Apic Publications.
- Fajana, S. and Shadare, O. (2012). Workplace Relations, Social Dialogue and Political Milieu in Nigeria. *International Journal of Business Administration, 3(1), 75-83*.
- Fatile, J. O and Adejuwon, K. D. (2011). Conflict and conflict management in Tertiary Institutions: The case of Nigerian universities. *European journal of humanities and social sciences, 7(1)*.
- Ibrahim, Y (2012). *Integrity as a Panacea to Poverty Shackles in Nigeria: The Role of Nigeria Custom Service*. Text of an International Paper presented at Nigeria Custom Service, 2012 on the Occasion of Comptroller-General Annual’s Conference held at the Main Auditorium, Umara Musa Yar Adua’s University, Nov 26-30.
- Idris, S and Alegbeleye, G (2015). Discipline and Organization Effectiveness: A Study of Nigeria Custom Service. *Review of Public Administration and Management, Vol No. 7. December; 2015: ISSN:2315-7844*.
- Longe, O (2015). Impact of Work Place Conflict Management on Organizational Performance: A Case Study of Nigerian Manufacturing Firm. *Journal of Management and Strategies, 6 (2), 83-92*.
- Ma’ Z (2007). *Chinese Conflict Management Styles and Negotiation Behaviour: An Empirical Test. International Journal of Cross Cultural Management, Vol 7 No1*.
- Malak, A; Sukaina, M ; and Norlena H (2020). The Effects of Conflict Management Styles on Employee Performance among Lebanese Industrial Firms. *Journal of Technology and Operations, Management, 15 (1) 50-59*.
- Mba, O. (2013). Conflict Management and Employee Performance in Julius Berger Nigeria Plc. Bonny Island. *International Journal of Academic Research in Management, 2(4), 125- 139*.
- Nair, N. (2007). Towards Understanding the Role of Emotions in Conflict: A Review and Future Directions. *International Journal of Conflict Management, Vol. 19, No. 4, pp. 359-381*.
- Ndulue, T and Ekechukwu, H (2016). Impact of Conflict Management on Employee Performance: A Style of Nigeria Breweries Plc. Lagos: *European Journal of Business and Management*.

Nigeria Custom Service Bulletin, 2020.

- Olaniyi, R (2009). *History of Conflicts in Nigeria*. Abuja: National University of Nigeria. Ozkalp, E; Sungur Z and Ozedmir A (2009). Conflict Management Styles of Turkish Managers. *Journal of European Industrial Training*.
- Olonade, Z; Omotoye, O and Ayodeji, B (2021). Conflict Management Strategies and Employee Involvement in Transmission Company of Nigeria, TCN, Ostun State, Nigeria. *Berjays Journal of Services and Management, Vol 10 (6)*.
- Onowu, C (2008). *Conflict Management Study of Organization: A Study of Anamaco and Capital City Ltd: A Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirement for the Award of Masters in Business Administration*.
- Onyema, U and Ekweozor, C (2020). Corporate Malfeasance and Performance in Nigeria Custom Service. *International Journal of Innovative Development and Policy Studies 8(3), July-Sept 2020, ISSN-2467-8465*.
- Osisioama, C (2016). *Conflict Management and Peace Building in Nigeria: Finding the Common Ground*. A Paper Presented at NIM South East, Zonal Summit held at Akanu Ibiam International Conference Abakaliki Sept 6, 2016.
- Osisioama, H, Osisioama, C and Chukwuemeka, O (2012). Developing a Conflict Management Model for Nigerian Executive. *Singaporean Journal of Business Economics and Management Studies, Vol. No 1*.
- Otite, N and Albert, O (2016). *Community Conflict in Nigeria: Management, Resolutions and Transformation*. Ibadan: Spectrum.
- Owan, V (2018). Conflict Management Strategies and Secondary School Teachers' Job Involvement in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross Rivers, Nigeria. *Journal of Education Development, Vol 45(2)*.
- Skjorshammer, M. (2001). Conflict Management in a Hospital: Designing Processing Structures and Intervention Methods. *Journal of Management Psychology, Vol. 15, No.2, pp. 606-62*.
- Uchendu, C; Anijaobi, F and Odigwe, F (2013). Conflict Management and Organizational Performance in Secondary Schools in Cross River State. *Nigeria Research Journal in Organizational Psychology and Education Studies 2 (2), 67-71*.
- Walton R. E. and Dutton J. M. (1969). The Management of Interdepartmental Conflict: A Model and Review. *Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol. 14 No. 1, pp. 73-86*.
- Zahid, H (2017). The Impact of Organizational Conflict on Employee's Performance in a Private Commercial Banks of Bangladesh. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management, 19(10), 12-21*.