

SUSTAINABLE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES ON THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT OF ORGANIZATIONS IN SOUTHEAST NIGERIA

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Abstract: The study examined the effect of Sustainable Conflict Management Strategies on the working environment of Organizations in Southeast Nigeria. The study examines the impact of avoiding and cooperating in conflicts on the workplace environment of sustainable organizations in Southeastern Nigeria. To carry out the research, 720 respondents were surveyed from public and private organizations throughout the region, using a quantitative design. The study group was found to be highly educated, with most people having HND/Bachelor's qualifications, and they were actively working in their professions for 5–10 years. The measurement model showed that the constructs are both reliable and valid. The Alpha and CR values were both in the good range, from 0.732 to 0.822 and 0.793 to 0.891, respectively. Since AVD (0.513), COL (0.602), and WOS (0.524) are all above 0.50, the results indicate convergence. The Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT values indicate that the factors are not related. According to SEM, using the Avoidance Strategy led to a poorer work environment, whereas using the Collaboration Strategy improved it. The model helped explain 8.4% ($R^2 = 0.084$) of the differences in the working environment and was found to be significant ($F = 33.08$, $p < 0.001$).

In conclusion, organizations in Southeast Nigeria should prioritize collaborative conflict management strategies while minimizing avoidance tactics. The study recommends that Organizations should invest in training programs that focus on collaborative conflict resolution techniques.

Keywords: Conflict, Environment, Management, Strategies, Working

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Sustainable conflict management strategies are essential for addressing and resolving conflicts in a manner that promotes long-term peace and stability. Unlike traditional approaches that may focus solely on immediate resolution, sustainable strategies aim to tackle the root causes of conflict, ensuring that solutions are enduring and beneficial to all parties involved. This holistic approach recognizes that conflicts often arise from complex social, economic, and political factors, necessitating a comprehensive understanding of the context in which they occur. One of the core principles of sustainable conflict management is inclusivity. Engaging all stakeholders, including marginalized groups, in the dialogue process can lead to more equitable and sustainable outcomes (Lederach,

1997). Furthermore, integrating local knowledge and cultural practices into conflict resolution frameworks enhances the legitimacy and acceptance of the solutions proposed (Fisher, 2000).

Sustainable conflict management also emphasizes the importance of building capacities for peace within communities. This involves not only addressing immediate grievances but also fostering resilience and promoting social cohesion (Galtung, 1996). Strategies such as mediation, dialogue facilitation, and peacebuilding initiatives can empower communities to manage conflicts proactively, reducing the likelihood of violence and promoting a culture of peace (Barash & Webel, 2013). Moreover, the interplay between environmental sustainability and conflict management has gained increasing attention. Resource scarcity, exacerbated by climate change, can lead to conflicts over land, water, and other vital resources. Therefore, incorporating environmental considerations into conflict management processes is crucial for ensuring that solutions are sustainable in the face of ecological challenges (Homer-Dixon, 1999).

In Southeast Nigeria, the interplay between conflict management strategies and organizational sustainability is increasingly recognized as a critical factor in fostering a conducive working environment. The implementation of sustainable conflict management strategies can significantly enhance the working environment by fostering collaboration, trust, and mutual respect among employees. By engaging stakeholders in dialogue and decision-making processes, organizations can create an inclusive atmosphere that values diverse perspectives and reduces tensions (Okanazu et al., 2020). This inclusivity not only mitigates conflicts but also enhances employee morale and productivity, which are essential components of organizational sustainability. Moreover, sustainable conflict management strategies contribute to organizational sustainability by promoting resilience and adaptability in the face of challenges. Organizations that effectively manage conflicts are better positioned to navigate changes in the external environment, such as economic fluctuations or regulatory shifts. This adaptability is crucial for maintaining operational efficiency and achieving long-term goals (Asha'ari et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the integration of environmental considerations into conflict management practices is vital in Southeast Nigeria, where resource scarcity can exacerbate tensions. By addressing environmental issues alongside social and economic factors, organizations can develop comprehensive strategies that not only resolve conflicts but also promote sustainable practices that benefit both the organization and the community (Okanazu et al., 2020).

1.2 Statement Of The Problem

In Southeast Nigeria, persistent conflicts arising from socio-economic disparities, resource competition, and political tensions pose significant challenges to organizational sustainability. Despite the critical role of organizations in fostering economic development and social cohesion, many struggle to maintain a productive working environment due to unresolved conflicts. Traditional conflict management approaches have proven inadequate, often leading to short-term solutions that fail to address the underlying causes of disputes.

This situation highlights a pressing need for sustainable conflict management strategies that not only resolve immediate issues but also promote long-term stability and resilience within organizations. The lack of effective conflict management mechanisms negatively impacts employee morale, productivity, and overall organizational performance, hindering efforts to achieve sustainable growth. Furthermore, the integration of environmental considerations into these strategies remains underexplored, despite the region's vulnerability to resource-related conflicts.

Thus, the problem statement encapsulates the urgent necessity to investigate the effect of sustainable conflict management strategies on the working environment of organizational sustainability in Southeast Nigeria. Understanding this relationship is essential for developing frameworks that enhance organizational resilience, foster a collaborative culture, and ultimately contribute to broader socio-economic development in the region.

1.3 Objective Of The Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the effect of Sustainable Conflict Management Strategies on the working environment of Organizational Sustainability in Southeast Nigeria. The specific objectives are to;

- i. Examining the effect of the Avoidance strategies on the working environment of Organizational Sustainability in Southeast Nigeria.
- ii. Evaluate the effect of Collaboration strategies on the working environment of Organizational Sustainability in Southeast Nigeria.

1.4 Hypotheses Of The Study

- i. Avoidance strategies have no significant effect on the working environment of Organizational Sustainability in Southeast Nigeria.
- ii. Collaboration strategies have no significant effect on the working environment of Organizational Sustainability in Southeast Nigeria.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Conceptual Review

Conflict Management

Conflicts are inevitable in any workplace. The performance of employees could be damaged, compromised, and incompetent by conflicts. According to Shetach (2012), Conflict is part of social and business life; hence, it is found everywhere. Conflict can be seen as a reality of social life that exists at all levels of society; it can be said to be as old as man. Due to the immense social interaction that takes place in an organization, conflict is unavoidable; however, its management determines whether the result will be positive or negative (John-Eke and Akintokunbo, 2020). There is no anomaly in organizational conflict because it produces or presents an opportunity for modification and settlement between the aggrieved parties for the well-being of both the employees and the organization (Osad & Osas, 2013). Conflict can be negative when it creates resistance to change, establishes uproar, interpersonal relations distrust, low productivity, and organizational ineffectiveness (Hotepo, Asokere, Abdul-Azeez, & Ajemunigbohun, 2010).

Organizational conflict crops up when there is disagreement on how a job or task should be executed; this could be disagreement between individual, inter-personal or intergroup; how this conflict is managed to determine its outcome. According to Riaz and Junaid (2011), ineffective managed organizational conflict leads to reduced confidence levels, stress, and frustration as well as produces anxiety which could cause humiliation, disengagement. It also produces more conflict and destructively affects the entire organization. Effective conflict management enhances organizational development through employee dedication, enthusiasm, absorption it also boosts morale, and stimulates individuals which will in turn lead to organizational effectiveness ((John-Eke and Akintokunbo, 2020).

Conflict management plays a vital role in conflict resolution, defined that conflict management is a behavior oriented toward intensification, reduction, and resolution of tension. There are different types of conflicts based on the nature of conflict itself, such as manifest, perceived, latent, line and staff, organized and unorganized

conflicts. Also, studies show that CMS plays a significant role in the relationship between employees' teams and organizational commitment (Min et al., 2020).

Conflict management is a means of curtailing apprehension and the negative influence of conflicts through the application of several measures designed to create awareness as well promote an understanding of the conflict situation by various parties involved. Management of conflict is pertinent topic for every business owner, stakeholders etc., because mismanaged conflict can have negative outcomes on organizational effectiveness (Obute, Asogwa and Eze, 2020).

Conflicts are inescapable in any workplace. Supervisors and employees can have conflicts on many issues, yet these issues are meant to be resolved in the best possible way to achieve organizational goals effectively. Supervisors adopt several CMSs by using their skills and behavior to implement those strategies in the best way to enhance employees' performance. Studies examined the effects of SB, such as communication, to adopt an appropriate CMS to enhance employees' performance (Corn, 2013).

Kodikal, Rahiman and Pakerrappa (2014) examined that supervisors' behavior of using competing, compromising, accommodating, collaborating strategies was preferred by employees in different situations to resolve conflicts and enhance employee performance. Supervisors' collaborative conflict management behavior plays a significant decisive role in organizations and vice versa. Studies also suggest that collaborating and accommodating strategy enhances performance rewards (Min et al., 2020).

Conflict Management styles

The timely identification of nature and significance of sources of conflicts in an organization is the major step in developing conflict management strategies. The best technique in managing conflicts in an organization is to focus on strategies that will enhance constructive function to optimize organizational effectiveness; therefore, it is important to identify all levels of conflict in organization, be it individual, interpersonal or intergroup conflicts (John-Eke and Akintokunbo, 2020). Uchendu, Anijaobi and Odigwe (2013), argued that since conflict is unavoidable in organizations, its management determines whether it will produce positive or negative effect on the organizational effectiveness. Proper recognition and immediate clarification of the underlying tension before the conflict ensues or escalates translate to effective management of conflict in an organization.

Scholars have deduced a two dimensional framework of conflict handling strategies based on assertiveness and cooperativeness of the parties concerned. Some of the important strategies being used for organizational conflicts management are: Collaboration, competition, bargaining, avoidance and compromising; happen to fall under the

two axes (Tabitha and Florence, 2019; Madalina, 2016; John-Eke and Akintokunbo, 2020)

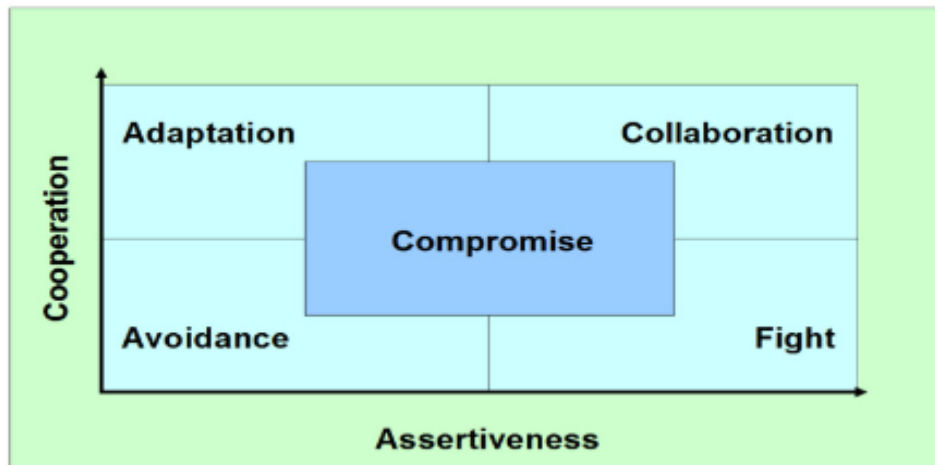


Figure 1: Conflict management methods (Madalina, 2016).

Specialists say that the implementation of any of these models is wrong, there is only appropriate or inappropriate times to use each of them. In conclusion, it is important that managers know how to discern the appropriate type of conflict management means depending on its status and values and entities involved (Madalina, 2016). The relevant literature clearly suggests that more cooperative conflict management strategies, such as integrating and obliging (in which a meaningful amount of concern is shown for the other party) are likely to produce positive individual and organizational outcomes, while less cooperative strategies like dominating and avoiding (in which little concern is shown for the other party) frequently result in escalation of conflict and negative outcomes (Rahim and Katz, 2019).

Avoidance Strategy

Avoidance is a non-confrontational strategy that includes keeping quiet about own views, ignoring disagreements, withdrawing from potential arguments, or avoiding topics that can be sources of disputes (Putnam & Wilson, 1982). In avoidance, a party suppresses complaints and refrains from self-assertion. As a result, it often entails abandonment of self-interests and resignation to unfairness, with feelings of internal frustration and hostility remaining.

However, it is possible that the negative view on avoidance is culturally biased because the models we discussed previously were constructed based on the observations and empirical findings on conflicts among Western people. A different cultural perspective may provide a different view. Research with Asian people has demonstrated that they often

Ken-ichi and Emi (2010) suggest that avoidance is selected to maintain social relationships. Then, how does avoidance contribute to the maintenance of relationships? Those who take avoidance in conflict situations do not harm others, so they are less likely to be a target of hostility, negative evaluation, or exclusion by others (Olekals et al., 2008). Based on this reasoning, we assumed that avoidance is an identity strategy by which one presents oneself as a good member or partner worthy of social relationships, and so it is an important conflict management strategy, especially for collectivists who place great value on the maintenance of social relationships. Brew and Cairns (2004) emphasized that those who are concerned with the protection of others' faces tend to choose avoidance, but we assumed that avoidance is also effective in the protection of one's face (personal identity).

Scholars have diverse views on the use of avoidance strategies in organizational conflict management. Rollag, as cited by Abdullah (2015), asserts that not all work groups are teams, because for them to be called a team, all the elements of a team must be embedded in them; these include commitment, goals, accountability, and interdependence. The emphasis is that the conflict management strategy adopted by a group has a way of changing it from a group to a team. Simmons and Peterson, as cited in Abdullah (2015), agreed that avoidance strategy is detrimental to organizational effectiveness because conflicts are unavoidable and never resolved, noting that avoiding conflict could intensify the outcome and also create employees' opposition to management decisions, etc. While Abdullah (2015) opined that avoidance strategy should be recognized as a viable form of conflict management in some cases, emphasizing that when avoidance strategy is adopted in an organization, it can enhance team building and organizational effectiveness.

Collaboration Strategy

Collaboration strategy is aimed at satisfying the needs of parties concerned, especially when the members have mutually significant goals (John-Eke and Akintokunbo, 2020). Collaborating is used to resolve important conflicts, especially those affecting relationships between groups. The predominant activities in collaborating are integrating solutions, marshaling perspectives, gaining commitments, and learning more about the other parties and the conflict itself (Mekelburg, 2000).

Collaboration is a continuous process, a building and rebuilding of relationships, and requires a continuously engaged facilitator to move it step by step through the project phases; the continuous involvement of the project manager meets this need. The project manager is also responsible for the success of the project for all stakeholders and is most highly motivated to seek a cooperative, rather than adversarial project environment (Mekelburg, 2000).

Working Environment

Environment is everything that is outside the company but have an influence on the growth and development of the company (Surjosuseno, 2015). In general, the environment cannot be controlled by the company so the company had to adjust to the environment. By paying attention to a good working environment or create working conditions that can provide the motivation to work (Sofyan, 2013).

Working environment has two dimensions. It consists of physical work environment and non-physically attached to the employee that cannot be separated from the business development of employee performance (Bushiri, 2014). The dimensions of the working environment according to Sedarmayanti (2012) are divided into the work environment physical and non-physical (Riyanto, Sutrisno and Ali, 2017; Taheri, Miah and Kamaruzzaman, 2020). Results have shown that the worst scenario comes from those organizations that give less importance to the working environment. And, the working environment complies with job security, employee safety, appreciation of performance, motivating facilities, and maintaining a good understanding among coworkers and supervisors. He described the employee's attachment to the organization as strengthened by receiving proper recognition from the organization. Although factors like wage rate, flexible working period, and involving employees in decision making also play a vital role for a better working environment (Taheri, Miah, and Kamaruzzaman, 2020)

Organizational Sustainability

Sustainability is a popular theme in society and has also entered organizations under the denomination Organizational Sustainability (OS). Sustainability is a state in which an organization or a society exhibits a relation

to economic, environmental, and social aspects (Munck & Souza, 2009). So, it may be inferred that OS “balances the economic, environmental and social development, as much as in the internal as in the external sphere of the organization. Enables the organization the capacity to survive and pay the invested capital; seeks the reduction of environmental impacts and promotes the rational use of natural resources; guarantees the individuals sufficient resources to access equal opportunities and development in face of organizational objectives, as well as assures that individuals receive balanced and contextual social and environmental benefits and detriments that arise from organizational activities (Munck, Bansi, Dias, & Cella-de-Oliveira, 2013).

Theoretical Review

The Stakeholders Theory

While many theoretical lenses are used to deal with the issue of social sustainability, one of the main frameworks is the stakeholder theory (Freeman, 2010; Freeman et al., 2010). More and more contributions in recent literature in effect agree that social sustainability and the stakeholder theory are consistent because they are both concerned with value creation on multiple fronts (Guerci et al., 2014). Stakeholders are groups and individuals that are influential and/or are influenced by an organisation (Freeman, 2010); they may have legitimate interests in the organisation’s activity and can be affected by its activity, or they prove to be necessary for the organizational goals. According to this perspective, building a socially sustainable organisation requires a variety of stakeholders to be involved and listened to in different strategic processes, such as re-designing a more sustainable workplace, promoting more sustainable policies in human resource management and planning more socially sustainable supply chain practices or customer initiatives (Ehnert and Harry, 2012).

Theories of conflict

Conflict has undergone a transition in the way it has been viewed by scholars. They are:

- i. Human relation school view of conflicts: This theory believes that conflict is available by creating an environment of goodwill and trust management has always, been concerned with avoiding conflict if possible and resolving it soon it occurs.
- ii. Traditional school view of conflicts: This theory views conflicts as bad for an organization because it is disruptive, unnatural, and represent a form of deviant behaviour which should be controlled and changed if the objectives of the organization are to be achieved. This group of thoughts believes that a conflict situation can have tragic consequences for some people and an adverse effect on organizational performance.
- iii. Integrationist school view of conflict: This is the most recent perspective and explicitly argues that some conflicts should not only be seen as good or bad but rather that some conflicts are necessary for a group to perform effectively (DC Dreu & Van de Vliert, 1997) and formally.
- iv. The Interactionist school of view of conflict. This group of philosophers believes that conflict is a positive force and necessary for effective performance. This approach encourages a minimum level of conflict within the group to encourage self-criticism, change and innovation, and to help prevent apathy or to greet a tolerance for harmony and the status quo conflict as part of life is an of life is an inventible feature of organizational life and should be judged by its performance.

2.3 Empirical Review

Ohbuchi and Atsumi (2010) conducted a study on the topic, “Avoidance brings Japanese Employees What they care about in Conflict Management: Its Functionality and “Good Member”. In this study, we attempted to examine the functionality of avoidance for organizational conflict management by comparing its outcomes with those of

other strategies. Based on the cultural theory, we specifically predicted that avoidance would be useful in the formation of interdependent identity among cultural collectivists. 341 Japanese business employees were asked to rate their conflicts with supervisors in terms of coping strategies and goal achievements. Consistent with our predictions, the results indicated that avoidance contributed to group harmony and interdependent identity while it hampered personal interests and fairness. The theory of the functionality of avoidance was validated, at least with collectivists, although this long-range strategy seems to depend on an individual's belief that the organization is properly managed.

Uwa (2014) examined the role of conflict management strategies on employees' productivity in a Nigerian civil service. Four conflict management strategies were considered, which include collective bargaining, negotiation, avoidance, and imposition. The descriptive survey design was adopted, and a self-developed questionnaire, tagged Conflict Management Strategies and Employees' Productivity Questionnaire, was used in the data collection. The reliability of the instrument was tested, and a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.92 was obtained for the whole instrument. Taro Yamane's formula was used in determining sample size, and a stratified random sampling technique was used in selecting 240 respondents from a cross-section of four ministries in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service, South-South, Nigeria. Pearson product-moment correlation and multiple regression were used to analyse the hypotheses. Collective bargaining and negotiation showed a significant positive contribution to employees' productivity, while that obtained for avoidance and imposing was significantly negative. Also, collective bargaining and negotiation were significantly positively related to employees' productivity.

Olukayode (2015) examined the impact of workplace conflict management on organizational performance in a Nigerian manufacturing firm. 250 respondents were selected using the stratified random sampling technique. While data was generated using validated structured questionnaires. Descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized to analyze data collected from the participants. Through the use of Spearman correlation analysis, the results of the empirical tests revealed a significantly positive relationship between conflict management strategies accommodation, collective bargaining and compromise with organizational performance. While non-integrative conflict management strategies (domination, competition and avoidance) had a negative statistically determinate effect on organizational performance. Also, the result of the regression analysis showed that collective bargaining strategy demonstrated the highest significant positive correlation with organizational performance. The findings of the study showed that conflicts crop up over several factors of organizational experiences which includes economic and goal incompatibility orientations in the workplace. Management and union conflict of interest was discovered to be the most prevalent form of organizational conflict that exists in the workplace.

Min, Iqbal, Khan, Akhtar, Anwar and Qalati (2020) investigated the relationship between supervisory behavior, conflict management strategies, and sustainable employee performance and inquires the mediating effect of conflict management strategies. Data were collected from the SMEs of the manufacturing industry of Pakistan. The significance of the model was assessed using the PLS-SEM (structural equation modeling). The findings of the study revealed a positive and significant relationship between supervisory behavior and sustainable employee behavior. Similarly, conflict management strategies had a positive effect on the relationship between supervisory behavior and sustainable employee behavior. This study adds in the current literature of supervisory behavior as a critical predictor of sustainable employee performance in two ways. Firstly, this study validates Conflict management strategies as an influential mediator between the relationship of supervisory behavior and sustainable employee performance. Secondly, this study provides substantial practical implications for managers at SMEs to

enhance sustainable employee performance through supervisory behavior, stimulated by conflict management strategies. This study is based on cross-sectional data; more longitudinal studies can further strengthen the generalizability of relationships between the constructs.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative survey design using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to examine the effect of sustainable conflict management strategies, specifically avoidance and collaboration, on the working environment of organizational sustainability in Southeast Nigeria. Data will be collected from employees across public and private organizations using a structured questionnaire based on validated Likert-scale items. The constructs measured include avoidance and collaboration strategies (independent variables) and the working environment of organizational sustainability (dependent variable). A multistage sampling technique will be used to ensure representation, and a sample size of at least 200 respondents is targeted. Validity and reliability will be assessed through confirmatory factor analysis, while data analysis will be conducted using SmartPLS. The SEM approach will involve evaluating both the measurement and structural models. The measurement model will test for convergent and discriminant validity, ensuring that the constructs are accurately measured. The structural model will assess the hypothesized relationships using path coefficients and significance testing via bootstrapping. Model fit indices (such as R-squared and F-statistic) will determine the adequacy of the model. The study tests two hypotheses: that avoidance and collaboration strategies each have no significant effect on the working environment. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, anonymity, and institutional approval will guide the research process.

4. RESULTS

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	401	55.69%
	Female	319	44.31%
Age Group	18-25	111	15.42%
	26-35	313	43.47%
	36-45	224	31.11%
	46 and above	72	10.00%
Educational Qualification	Diploma/OND	74	10.28%
	HND/Bachelor's	431	59.86%
	Master's	176	24.44%
	PhD	39	5.42%
Work Experience	<5years	218	30.28%
	5-10years	291	40.42%
	11-15years	137	19.03%
	>15years	74	10.28%

The demographic characteristics of the 720 respondents presented in **Table 1** provide insight into the composition of the study sample across five key variables: gender, age group, educational qualification, and work experience.

The information in Table 1 tells us about the gender, age, education and experience of the 720 respondents. Out of all respondents, 55.69% were male and 44.31% were female. The representation of both genders is balanced enough to capture their opinions in the study. Most of the people who responded are between the ages of 26 and 45, making up more than 74% of the group. In other words, the majority of the group is at a high point in their careers, meaning they likely have learned how to handle conflicts in the workplace. The highest percentage of respondents (59.86%) graduated with HND/Bachelor's degrees, followed by people with Master's degrees (24.44%) and then Diploma/OND (10.28%). A very small share (5.42%) of these people have PhDs. This shows that the employees in the organizations are educated, so their answers about policies and managing conflicts are likely reliable. Forty percent of participants have worked in their field for 5–10 years, 30% have less than 5 years and 19% have 11–15 years of experience. Only 10.28% of people working in this field have worked for more than 15 years. Since the workforce includes both early-career and mid-level experts, it helps to understand conflict from multiple perspectives. All in all, the group appears to have the knowledge and experience needed to examine how conflict management strategies affect the sustainability of organizations in Southeast Nigeria.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2: Descriptive summary

Construct	Mean	Std. Dev	Interpretation
Avoidance Strategy (AVD)	2.53	0.34	Below acceptable threshold (3.0) – Low usage
Collaboration	3.97	0.28	Above acceptable threshold – High usage
Working Environment	3.67	0.32	Above acceptable threshold – Healthy outcome

The Likert scale considers a mean score of 3.0 to be acceptable. The results show that avoidance was not preferred by most people. Participants felt that there was strong use of collaborative efforts and a positive atmosphere at work.

Table 3: Response rate for Avoidance Strategy

Response Level	Frequency	Percentage
Very low (1-2)	46	6.39%
Low (2.1-3.0)	614	85.28%
Moderate (3.1 – 4.0)	60	8.33%
High (4.1 – 5.0)	0	0.00%

Table 4: Response rate for Collaboration Strategy

Response Level	Frequency	Percentage
Very low (1-2)	0	0.00%
Low (2.1-3.0)	0	0.00%
Moderate (3.1 – 4.0)	388	53.89%
High (4.1 – 5.0)	332	46.11%

Table 5: Response rate for Working Environment of Organizational Sustainability (WOS)

Response Level	Frequency	Percentage
Very low (1-2)	0	0.00%

Low (2.1-3.0)	13	1.81%
Moderate (3.1 – 4.0)	589	81.81%
High (4.1 – 5.0)	118	16.39%

Table 6: Reliability and validity Test

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE	Interpretation
Avoidance Strategy	0.732	0.801	0.513	Reliable
Collaboration Strategy	0.741	0.793	0.602	Reliable
Working Environment of Organizational Sustainability (WOS)	0.822	0.891	0.524	Reliable

Table 7: Fornell Lacker

	AVD	COL	WOS
AVD	0.716		
COL	0.631	0.776	
WOS	0.584	0.611	0.724

Table 8: HTMT

	AVD	COL	WOS
AVD	1		
COL	0.832	1	
WOS	0.344	0.409	1

We tested the reliability and validity of the study constructs. The Avoidance Strategy, Collaboration Strategy, and WOS have good measurement qualities. Table 6 confirms that all the constructs had Cronbach's Alpha above the recommended 0.70, with values of 0.732 (Avoidance Strategy), 0.741 (Collaboration Strategy), and 0.822 (WOS). Furthermore, Composite Reliability (CR) was 0.801, 0.793, and 0.891, meaning the questionnaires were reliable. Since all AVE values were over 0.50, it shows that the constructs are well able to explain the differences between the items in their scale. Moreover, the Fornell-Larcker Criterion presented in Table 7 demonstrates that the constructs are distinct from each other. The square roots of the AVEs displayed on the diagonal are 0.716 for AVD, 0.776 for COL, and 0.724 for WOS. The values of AVD and COL (0.631) and AVD and WOS (0.584) are greater than the relationship between COL and WOS (0.611). As a result, each construct is linked more to its indicators than to the indicators of other constructs, which shows that discriminant validity is met. Consequently, the constructs chosen for the study are trustworthy and accurate, making it justified to use them in the next step of analysis.

Structural Model (Regression Analysis)

Table 9: Result

Predictor	Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
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Avoidance	-0.164	-4.82	0.000	Significant (Reject H_{01})	negative	effect
Collaboration	0.265	6.47	0.000	Significant (Reject H_{01})	positive	effect
R ² (Model Fit)	0.084			8.4% variance explained	in	WOS
Intercept	3.04					
F-Sta	33.08		<.000	Model is statistically significant		

In **Table 9**, you can find the results for the structural model. The structural model measures the effect of the predictors Avoidance Strategy and Collaboration Strategy on the Working Environment of Organizations (WOS). The table reveals that for the Avoidance Strategy, the coefficient (β) is -0.164 and its t-value is -4.82, while its p-value is 0.000. This means that the use of avoidance strategies in conflict management is connected to a lower quality of the organization's work environment. Meanwhile, the Collaboration Strategy shows a positive effect with a p-value of 0.000 and a t-value of 6.47. So, it seems that when people collaborate in resolving conflicts, there is more sustainability and positivity in their workplace. The R² value of 0.084 demonstrates that both conflict management strategies help to explain 8.4% of the differences in the working environment. This may not look like much, but it is still significant in organizational behavior because human factors are often complicated. If both predictors are zero, the baseline level in the working environment is 3.04. Besides, the F-statistic is 33.08 and the p-value is less than 0.001, meaning that the entire regression model is statistically significant. The research has proven that avoiding problems is harmful, whereas teamwork leads to a more sustainable environment at work.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

What this study explored helps us understand the effects of sustainable conflict management strategies on the workplace in Southeast Nigeria. Table 1 shows that the study sample included nearly equal numbers of males and females, which allowed for diversity in the results. Most of the respondents were between 26 and 35 years old (43.47%) or between 36 and 45 years old (31.11%). In terms of education, 59.86% of the labor force owned HND/Bachelor's certificates and 24.44% held Master's degrees. Besides, 40.42% of the respondents had worked for 5–10 years, proving that many had enough work experience to give informed answers, and 30.28% were new to the field. Out of the staff, 48.61% were junior, 37.92% were senior, and 13.47% managed others. The study found that the measures used were reliable and valid (Table 6). Cronbach's Alpha for Avoidance Strategy was 0.732, for Collaboration Strategy it was 0.741, and for the Working Environment of Organizations (WOS) it was 0.822, all higher than 0.70, indicating that the questions in each section were consistent. The CR values for Avoidance (0.801), Collaboration (0.793), and WOS (0.891) all showed that the factors were reliable. Each AVE measure was higher than 0.50 and confirmed that the measures for Avoidance, Collaboration and WOS had good convergent validity. The Fornell-Larcker Criterion (Table 7) indicated that the study met the requirement for discriminant validity since the square roots of AVE were higher than the correlations. It means that every construct has its own unique characteristics. The model in Table 8 showed that the conflict management strategies influence the working environment. Overusing the Avoidance Strategy resulted in a worse and significantly harmful work environment ($\beta = -0.164$, $t = -4.82$, $p = 0.000$). Alternatively, using the Collaboration Strategy had a significant

and strong impact ($\beta = 0.265$, $t = 6.47$, $p = 0.000$) on workplace sustainability. This means that the strategies in the model are responsible for 8.4% of the changes in the workplace. While it may seem small, this is still considered meaningful in behavioral research because several factors often influence a company's results. Besides, the F-statistic of 33.08 ($p < 0.001$) proves that the models are statistically significant. All in all, the findings indicate that using sustainable strategies, mainly by collaborating, helps shape the environment at organizations in Southeast Nigeria. According to the results, avoiding others negatively affects the workplace, whereas working with others has a positive impact. Based on these findings, organizations must focus on cooperative solutions to help the company grow and remain united for the future.

5. CONCLUSION

The analysis of sustainable conflict management strategies reveals substantial implications for the working environment of organizations in Southeast Nigeria. The findings indicate that avoidance strategies, while often employed to sidestep immediate disputes, have a significant negative effect on workplace dynamics. This approach can lead to unresolved tensions, decreased morale, and hindered communication among team members. Conversely, collaboration strategies demonstrate a significant positive effect on the working environment. By fostering open dialogue and cooperative problem-solving, organizations can effectively address conflicts and enhance relationships among employees. This collaborative approach not only resolves disputes but also promotes a culture of trust and mutual respect, ultimately leading to higher productivity and job satisfaction.

In conclusion, organizations in Southeast Nigeria should prioritize collaborative conflict management strategies while minimizing avoidance tactics. By doing so, they can cultivate a healthier, more productive workplace, ensuring long-term success and employee well-being.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To enhance the working environment of organizations in Southeast Nigeria through effective conflict management strategies, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. Organizations should invest in training programs that focus on collaborative conflict resolution techniques. Equipping employees with skills to engage in constructive dialogue can foster a more cooperative workplace.
- ii. Create an environment that encourages open communication across all levels of the organization. Regular team meetings and feedback sessions can help address potential conflicts before they escalate.

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