CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOUR IN SELECTED MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS IN SOUTH SOUTH NIGERIA

AGBAEZE, KALU EMMANUEL (PhD)  
Department of Management,  
University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus

&

EBIRIM, OGUEHRI CHUKS (PhD)  
Department of Management,  
University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus

ABSTRACT
This study was carried out to investigate conflict management strategy and employee behaviour in selected multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria. It is an empirical study of selected eight multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria. A stratified sample size of 92 respondents was used. 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. The questionnaire was designed to obtain a fair representation of opinions using a five point Likert scale. A mean response cut-off score of 2.50 was adopted with a corresponding sampled standard deviation. Percentages were used to obtain information from demographic characters. Hypotheses formulated were tested using the Pearson product moment correlation co-efficient and the T-test at 0.05% level of confidence. The results revealed that there was positive significant relationship between conflict management strategy and employee behaviour in selected multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria. It was concluded that the management of multinational corporations should identify the conflict management strategies, take concrete notice of the conflict of interests of the employees, pin-point the causes of conflicts, so that there would be effective and efficient production of goods and services and also, the fostering of good relationship among the employees and between the management and employees in the multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria.

Keywords: Conflict, Management, Strategy, Employee Behaviour, Multinational Corporations.

INTRODUCTION
This research investigates conflict management strategy and employee behaviour in selected multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria. The establishment and sustenance of organizations with regards to achieving their set goals and objectives, requires the continuous and effective functioning of its material input with human element being indispensable. The human elements that are required to facilitate the goal attainment, often engage in disagreement and variance over factors such as interests, views, styles of management among others. The reactionary effect is due to the perceived incompatibilities resulting typically from
some form of interference or opposition which is termed as conflict (Obasan 2011). Conflict, as an inherent phenomenon in humans’ life arises as a daily challenge in multinational corporations. Conflict has got enormous attention of researchers in the last few decades because it has become global threat to every organization. It has cost billions of dollars and this has being the reasons while some employees tend to leave their organizations. There is a variety of views about conflict. Some people view conflict as a negative situation that must be avoided at any cost. Others have an opinion that conflict is a phenomenon which necessitates management. From this point of view, conflict is seen as an opportunity for personal growth and individuals try to use it to their best advantages (Violetta, 2012).

Marquis and Huston (2009) define conflict as the internal or external discord that results from differences in ideas, values or feelings between two or more people, some times over the struggle for resource control. Since the individuals have diverse backgrounds and culture, their interests, goals and values may not be compatible with that of the organization, hence conflict may arise (Mba, 2013). The word conflict brings to mind images such as antagonism, struggles between parties, opposition processes and threats to cooperation; it is not all conflicts that come in these forms especially in the multinational corporations. They come in form of needs to be met or desires to be satisfied, disagreements to be settled and ideas to be shared that eventually lead to change of attitudes, feelings and perceptions.

Fadipe, (2002) sees conflict as a form of disagreement in an establishment between two individuals or groups who have cause to interact formally or informally. Mba (2013) explains that conflict is a process of incompatible behaviour in the workplace. It may involve the interference or disruption by one person or group of persons, or in some ways which make another action to be less effective.

Conflict is a necessary and useful part of organizational life. It is inevitable and an integral part of the process of change. It is an aid to cooperation, but not an obstacle. There are two sides to conflict, one is destructive and unhealthy and the other has a problem solving base where those involved are willing to sublimate personality differences, to listen to other people’s views and to be open and candid to each other, be supportive, helpful and be cooperative to one another.

There are different factors responsible for instigating conflicts. For example in Pakistan, Muhammad, Nouman and Khan (2011) opine that miscommunication or communication gap, personal beliefs and differences in opinions are the causes of conflict. Most organizations see conflict as a means of improving both employee and organizational performance. The nature of most conflicts in Pakistan could be conflicts between management and employees and also members of the top management of the organization.

Through conflict management, a cooperative atmosphere should be created for promoting opportunities and movement directed towards non-violent, reconciliation or basic clashing of interest. It is important to realize that conflict is one of the best ways in the world to turn the tide and improve unsatisfactory conditions. There may be no real dispute to be managed, but there may be need for greater understanding, cooperation and team work to promote
interpersonal harmony and good organizational climate for teaching and learning. Conflict should not always be seen as something undesirable, but rather as a necessary outcome that can bring positive consequences if properly managed.

It is against this background that it becomes pertinent to study conflict management strategy and employee behaviour in selected multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria. The multinational corporations to be used in this research work include Shell Petroleum Development Company, Chevron Texaco Nigeria Limited, Mobile Telecommunication Network, Julius Berger Nigeria Plc, Coca-Cola, Exxon Mobil Oil Company, 9Mobile and the Nigerian Agip Oil.

These multinational corporations are firms with foreign subsidiaries that extend the firms in production and marketing beyond the boundaries of a single country and are also operational in Nigeria. The multinational corporations have their various home countries as headquarters and Nigeria as their host country where they work as expatriates with the Nigerian employees.

1.1 Statement of the Problem
Conflict is a complex and inevitable social phenomenon which permeates the fabrics of human and organizational life. Like other organizations, multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria are susceptible to interpersonal conflict over many issues. There are misunderstandings, conflicts, personality clashes and petty jealousy (Lewis, 2007). Lack of conflict management strategies has impacted negatively on the employees and the organizational behaviour of the corporations. This has contributed immensely to the failure of the organizations in not achieving their goals.

The multinational corporations like other organizations are mainly concerned with profitability, productivity, competitiveness and creativity. Conflicts are anti-production. It has the capacity to demoralize the employees and breed rancor in corporations. These obstacles can reduce the profitability of the corporations. Most multinational corporations conflict because of their inability to fulfill their collective agreements which would result to low employee morale, employees’ industrial action, machine hours, output, skilled personnel and organizational reputation. In this case, it is pertinent to examine conflict management strategy on employee behaviour in selected multinational corporations in South-South Nigeria.

1.2 Objective of the Study
The entire objective of the study is to examine conflict management strategy on employee behaviour in the selected multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. Ascertain the effect of employee conflict of interests and employee behaviour in selected multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria.
2. Identify the relationship between the causes of conflict and managerial/non-managerial employee perception in selected multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria.
3. Examine the effect of conflict resolution and the employee behaviour in selected multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria.

1.3 Research Questions

1. Does the employee conflict of interests have effect on employee behaviour in selected multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria?
2. What are the causes of conflict between managerial and non-managerial perception in selected multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria?
3. Does conflict management resolution have effect on employee behaviour in selected multinational corporations in South-South Nigeria?

1.4 Research Hypothesis

H1: There is significant relationship between employee’s conflict of interests and employee behaviour in selected multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria.

H2: There is significant relationship between the causes of conflict and the managerial/non-managerial perception in selected multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria.

H3: There is significant relationship between the conflict management resolution and the employee behaviour in selected multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Researchers have observed that the positive aspects of conflict enhance creativity, innovation and improvement on the quality of decision making and the provision of mutual understanding of the viable corporations (Friedman, et al 2006).

Organizations recruit new employees whenever there is conflict. The new employees might be functional, productive and more reliable than the previous employees in the organization. Conflict management resolution should be put in place to protect the interests of the employees at the workplace.

This study would help government and their agencies to settle their incompatibilities with the various labour unions through conflict management resolutions. Private sectors and other multinational corporations intending to establish businesses in Nigeria would find this study useful in resolving conflicts among their employees. Finally, this study would contribute to the general body of knowledge in management as a discipline, especially among future researchers in this field of study.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study comprised of the selected multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria. Eight multinational corporations, namely Shell Petroleum Development Company, Chevron Nigeria Limited, 9Mobile telecommunication, Mobile Telecommunication Network (MTN), Julius Berger Nigeria Plc, Coca-Cola, Exxon Mobil oil Company and the Nigerian Agip Oil Company are selected in the six states geo-political zones in South-South, Nigeria. The geo-political zones in South-South, Nigeria include Akwa Ibom state, Bayelsa state, Delta
state, Cross River state, Edo state and Rivers state. The selected multinational corporations individually operate in each of these states of South-South, Nigeria.

2.0 Review of Related Literature
2.1 Conceptual Framework
Conflict
Conflict emerges in an organization when an employee perceives that his/her goals are threatened or hindered by the activities of other employees (Mba, 2013). Schramm (2002) states that conflict is a serious disagreement and argument about something perceived to be important for the activities of the employees.

Azamosa (2004) observes that industrial conflict involves the total ranges of behaviour and attitudes that are in opposition between the employees and managers in the workforce. Duke (1999) observes that conflicts could arise between individual employees or group of employees in an organization if the goals are not specified or when the management shifts the blame on all or a unit(s) involved in work process. Factually, not all conflicts are bad and not all conflicts are good. Tsevendor (2008) opines that Malaysia Bank employees rated communication, perception, values and culture problems as moderately serious sources of conflict, although the staff differed in their perception to the degree of seriousness of these problems. Odusami (2002) identifies conditions of service, opportunity, salary and wages and job security as the leading sources of conflict in Nigeria.

Causes of Conflict
George (2016) identifies four major causes of conflict. They include lack of information, lack of resources, personal relationship and incompetent management.

i. Lack of information: Conflict can arise when one party feels it lacks important information. When employees are continually experiencing changes that they were not informed about, or if there are decisions being made that the staff feel it should be involved in, this can bring about conflict between managers and employees.

ii. Lack of resources. The University of Colorado at Boulder (2016) points out that lack of necessary resources can cause conflict among employees and make them to feel there is lack of resources needed to do their jobs. In this case, competition will arise among employees for the available resources. The employees who are unable to obtain what they need to perform their duties will begin to blame management for the lack of necessary resources.

Albert (2010) emphasizes that one of the major causes of conflict in Nigeria, is competition for resources. The cause of the conflict refers to all forms of human possessions such as land, money, power and influence that are often limited in supply.

iii. Personal relationship: The work environment can be a stressful place, and it can be made worse when personal differences begin to develop between employees. Of the major causes of work place conflict, personal relationships can be particularly counter-productive, because problems may be generated both at home and in the office.
Professional employment mediator noted that employees bring stress from home life to work and this can cause conflict among co-workers and managers.

iv. Incompetent management: Managers can create conflict in the workplace. A manager who does not understand the job tasks of his subordinates, or is uninformed about the job duties that each employee is supposed to perform, can be responsible for tension and conflict in the workplace. Employees who lose confidence in managers due to inconsistencies or bad planning can also become a source of conflict.

Conflict management strategies
The Rahim’s five strategies of conflict handling model was based on both the grid of managerial strategies proposed by Blake and Mouton, as well as the Thomas’ five modes model. Rahim (2011) points out that these dimensions portray the motivational orientation of individuals during conflict. Combination of these two dimensions results in five specific strategies of managing conflict, as shown in the figure below:

![Figure 1: Strategies of Conflict Management](image)

**Sources:** Rahim (2011); Boonsathorn (2007)

**Integrating Strategy:**
Integrating strategy or collaborating strategy of management is linked with problem solving and it involves openness, sharing information, searching for alternatives and examination of differences to reach an effective solution acceptable to both parties (Copley 2008).

**Accommodating Strategy**
This strategy is also known as smoothing or obliging strategy. Yuan, (2007), emphasizes that accommodating strategy is linked with low concern for self and high concern for others and associates, while attempting, to play down the differences and focusing on relationships, corporation and harmony. Therefore, it requires an individual to put aside his/her needs to please the other party in a conflict situation.
Compromising Strategy
This strategy intermediates between concern for self and others and typically involves bargaining “give and take” where both parties involved, relinquish some aspect in order to obtain a unit solution (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974). It is often used when the goals of both parties, who are equally powerful, such as labour union and management have reached a compromise.

Dominating Strategy
Dominating strategy, also known as competing exhibits high concern for self and low concern of others, meaning an impressing factor for accepting one situation (winner and loser) without any reason or discussion (Shermerhorn, 2000). Gross & Guerrero (2011) portray dominating strategy as a competing strategy in which the employees always stick to their arguments that they are correct and always try to win.

Avoiding Strategy
Avoiding strategy involves low concern for self and others which is associated with a tendency for people or groups in conflict to withdraw from the conflict situation or remain neutral. Lussier (2010) notes that avoidance is being neither assertive nor corporative and it is commonly used by people who are emotionally upset by the tensions and frustration of conflict.

The strategy is often used when the potential consequences of confronting the other party seem to outweigh the benefit of resolving the conflict.

Employee Behaviour
Hellriegel, Slocum and Stegeren (2010) emphasize that each individual makes assumptions about those with whom he or she works or spends time in leisure activities. To some extent, these assumptions influence a person’s behaviour toward others. An effective employee understands what affects his or her own behaviour before attempting to influence the behaviour of others.

The individual is the starting point of organizational effectiveness. Understanding the individual is crucial for enhancing individual team and organizational effectiveness. Each person is a physiological system composed of various sub system attitudes, perceptions, learning capabilities, personality needs, feelings, and values. Both internal and external factors shape a person’s behaviour on the job. The internal factors include learning ability, motivation, perception, attitudes, personality and values. The external factors that affect a person’s behaviour are the organization’s reward system, groups and teams, managerial leadership styles, organizational culture and organization’s design. These enumerated factors can result to conflict among employees and management in organizations.

Ezigbo (2011) points out that, to manage people effectively, it is necessary to understand the factors that affect how employees behave at work:
   i. Individual differences as affected by employee’s abilities, intelligence, personality, background, culture, gender and race.
ii. Attitudes: Causes and manifestations bestowed on the employees.
iii. Attribution theory: The judgment made on employees.
iv. Orientation: The approaches employees adapt to work.
v. Roles: The parts employees play in carrying out their work.

If these factors are not adequately implemented, it would result to conflict on employee behaviour.

Gibson et al (2012), explain that individuals are similar, but they are also unique. The study of individual differences such as attitudes, perceptions and abilities helps a manager explain differences in performance levels. The manager’s observation and analysis of individual behaviour and performance require consideration of variables that directly influence behaviour, or what an employee does. The individual’s variables include abilities and skills, background and demographic variables.

Organizational Behaviour
Gibson, Ivancevich, Donnelly and Konopask (2012), emphasize that the effectiveness of any organization is influenced greatly by human behaviour. People are a resource common to all organizations. One important principle of psychology is that each person is different. Each has unique perceptions, personality and life experiences. People have different ethnic backgrounds, different capabilities for learning and for handling responsibility, and different attitudes, beliefs and aspiration levels. The relationships among individuals and groups in organizations create expectations for individual behaviour. These expectations result in certain roles that must be performed. Some people must perform leadership roles, where as others must participate in the roles of followers. Middle managers, because they have both superiors and subordinates, must perform both roles. Organizations have systems of authority, status, and power, and people in organizations have varying needs from each system. Groups in organizations also have powerful impact on individual behaviour and on organizational performance.

A person’s behaviour in any situation involves the interaction of that individual’s personal characteristics and the characteristics of the situation. To help us identify the importance of managerial factors in organizational behaviour, we use the contingency or situational approach. The basic idea of the contingency approach is that there is no one best way to manage. A method that is very effective in one situation may not work at all in others. The contingency approach has grown in popularity because research has shown that given certain characteristics of a job and certain characteristics of the people doing the job, some management practices work better than others.

Hellriegel et al (2010) explain that for effective performance to prevail, all employees must clearly understand their jobs and the organizational design. Individuals enter organizations to work, earn money and pursue career goals. There must be the management of change that involves adapting an organization to the demands of the environment and the modification of actual behaviour of the employees. The dynamics of organizational change are explored and several basic strategies for achieving change improve organizational effectiveness.
Relationship between Conflict Management and Employee Behaviour

The ways of managing organizational conflict are as varied as its causes, origins and contexts. The purpose of conflict management, whether undertaken by the parties in conflict or whether involving the intervention of an outside party affects the entire structure of a conflict situation so as to contain the destructive components in the conflict process. In organizations, conflict arises among the employees as a result of individual differences in belief, attitudes, perceptions, aspirations and roles in their functions. The employees in a particular organization come from different ethnic background and different earning capabilities for handling responsibilities. In this case, conflict is bound to arise among the workers in the workplace. There must be effective conflict management for the employees. Effective conflict management succeeds in (1) reducing disruption stemming from the existence of a conflict, and (2) providing a solution that is satisfactory and acceptable. Efforts should be directed towards limiting some aspects of behaviour as strategies of conflict settlement and effort should also be directed towards the employees’ attitudes, skills, situation as well as behaviour and strategies of conflict resolution.

All organizations, whether simple or complex, possess a range of mechanisms or procedures for managing conflict. They are built into the organizational structure and are consciously employed by competent management to influence the course and development of a conflict. The success or effectiveness of such procedures can be gauged by the extent to which they limit conflict behaviour and the extent to which they help to achieve a satisfactory solution.

Conflict Management Resolution

Conflict resolution can be defined as the method and process involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict. It is important to know that various approaches, tools, methods and means are used for resolving conflict in practice. Kuye (2007) observes that conflict resolution methods can be direct and indirect approach. The direct approach consists of avoidance, smoothing, win-lose or forcing, compromise and problem solving, while indirect approach includes changing the organizational structure and pattern of relationship between conflicting parties through procedures, job redesigns, transfer etc, which must appeal to common goal in hierarchical referral and changing the human variable.

Each type of conflict requires an appropriate approach to overcome and resolve it. In this manner, the positive and constructive effects of conflicts are encouraged, while the negative and destructive ones are simultaneously removed (Baron, 2011). It is quite vital to pin-point that industrial peace and harmony are essential for the organizational growth and development in any organizational setting. Management, human resource managers and employees have roles to play in order to achieve these fundamental objectives. Mokinka (2006) explains that management or organizations must pay particular attention to the human resource management, and must be proactive in addressing employees’ welfare programmes as stated in the contracted agreement. Management should be committed to employees development and invest in continuous upgrading of employees capacity through training, retraining and educational development in all areas of needs.
Multinational Corporations
A multinational corporation is a corporation that has its facilities and other assets in at least one country other than its home country. Such companies have offices or factories in different countries and usually have a centralized head office where they co-ordinate global management (Mba, 2015). Very large multinationals have budgets that exceed those of many small countries. Investopedia (2014) explains that, nearly all major multinationals are American, Japanese, China or Western European, such as Nike, Coca-cola, Wal-Mart, Toshiba, Honda, and Microsoft among others. Advocates of multinationals say they create jobs and wealth that improve technology in countries that are in need of such development. On the other hand, critics say multinationals can have undue political influence over governments which exploit developing nations as well as create job losses in their own home countries.

For the purpose of this study, we are interested in identifying conflict management strategy on employee behaviour in selected multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria. Most of the multinationals operational in South –South Nigeria include Toyota, Julius Berger, MTN, Exxon Mobil Oil Company, Coca-Cola, Shell Petroleum development company, Nigerian Agip Oil company and among others. These multinational corporations employ workers who work for them, both locally and internationally. The multinational corporations and their sector of employees have their set goals to achieve and some times, there are conflicts of interests among them. It is paramount for these multinationals to map out conflict management strategies in resolving the issues between the management and the employees in the organizations. The conflicts to be resolved are in forms of friction, disagreement, or discord arising within a group when the belief or action of one or more member of the group are either resisted by or unacceptable to one or more members of another group. In managing the conflicts in the multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria, the management should identify the root causes of conflicts and their consequences notify the necessary actors involved and their role and apply the conflict management strategies by resolving the issues. These would foster positive relationship between the employees and the management by achieving their individual and collective goals and objectives. In multinational corporations, the leadership power mediates the needs of conflict management strategies.

The main causes of conflict in multinational corporations relate to perception and value problems. The specific issues bother on employee’s compensation, welfare and inadequate communication. The multinationals ought to resolve such conflicts by applying a combination of compromising, problem solving and dominating strategies in settling the conflict of the employees’ grievances.

2.2 Theoretical Framework
Theories are statement of invariant relationship among measurable phenomenon with the purpose of explaining, understanding, predicting and controlling such phenomenon. Theories can also explain and predict the properties of the phenomenon. For the purpose of this study, we would focus on four basic theories. They are buttressed as follows:
Role Theory
The role theory explains individual behaviour and functioning in an organization (Kahn, 1979). The roles have extrinsic values as determinant of boundaries between individual and organization, as well as determination of how information flows from individuals in the organization (Khan, 2011).

Attribution Theory
Attribution theory attempts to explain how people identify or make casual explanations of situations around them and the consequences of these situations, belief and behaviour. The theory assumes that all individuals behave as naive scientists seeking to understand the causes of salient outcomes.

Labour Process Theory
Labour process theory was anchored on radical theories informed by a Marxist frame of reference. Some of these theories were more prominent on economic assumptions pertaining to capitalist mode of economic organization being inherently explorative and prone to conflict. While others were more on sociological assumptions pertaining to the existence of class-based value system that serve to legitimize the dominance of capitalist interest.

Braverman (2004) states that labour process theory argues that the primary role of management is to convert raw materials into product through the use of labour, machines and the establishment of structures of power and control which ultimately convert the capacity of employees to perform work. It is only through this conversion that profitable production and capital accumulation take place.

Human Relation Theory
Human relation theory can be traced to the research work of (Hawthorne, 1930; Mayo, 1950; Maslow, 1954). The main thrust or argument of the established theory is that there must be improvement in worker’s attitude towards their work environment. The principal task of management on this concept is to manipulate workplace relations in ways that enable employees to feel personal satisfaction with each other.

2.3 Empirical Review
Idowu et al (2016) studied the impact of organizational objectives and performance on conflict management in a Nigerian mobile telecommunication company. The results of the findings showed that conflict management was motivated to achieve organizational objectives and performance through promotion of industrial harmony and peaceful relations, improved working environment, enhancing decision making process and achieving win-win situation among employees and management. The variables involved have positive significant relationships with each other. The results showed that mobile communication company in Nigeria mad use of organizational objectives and organizational performance to achieve conflict management. Most importantly, both organizational objectives and organizational performance had strong correlation with conflict management in the mobile communication company.
Dahshan and Keshk (2014) identified that there were statistically significant correlation between turnover intention and three conflict management styles (collaboration, compromise and avoiding). This meant that the more the use of these styles as conflict management strategy, the more nurses’ intention to stay in the organization. The result was supported with Chan et al (2007) who confirmed that the use of integrating conflict management style by managers led to positive subordinate outcomes and also concluded that managers’ effective conflict management style facilitated the social exchange process with their subordinates who induced subordinates’ positive work attitudes, including increased job satisfaction and decreased turnover intention.

Iravo et al (2015) studied the conflict management style influencing organizational commitment among Kenya seed company employees, Kenya. The study analyzed the importance of conflict in organizational commitment by focusing on conflict management strategies and styles. Practical experiences had shown that managers could not be left out of conflicts, but must take active part in it. Out of the five conflicts management styles, only three were found to correlate significantly with organizational commitment. Kenya seed company employees with higher integrating inclinations had higher value effort commitment and retention commitment, while those with higher compromising orientation were of higher value effort of organizational commitment.

Mba (2013) analyzed the study of conflict management and employee performance in Julius Berger Plc, Bonny Island. The study observed that the integration of all stakeholders’ interest went a long way in reducing conflicts in organizations which enhanced employee’s performance, based on democratic conflict management strategy. The study identified three major research findings which included:

a. Conflict management strategies at Julius Berger Nigeria plc. Bonny Island which had been relatively useful in minimizing the incidence of disruptive conflicts.
b. There was a significant relationship between conflict management strategies and performance in Julius Berger Nigeria plc. Bonny Island.
c. There was a significant relationship between managerial and non-managerial employees perception of the effectiveness of conflict management strategies in Julius Berger Nigeria Plc. Bonny Island.

3.0 Methodology
The study was focused on conflict management strategy and employee behaviour in selected multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria. All the multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria, constituted the population of the study. The number was somewhat infinite. In this case, the researcher decided to limit the target population to eight (8) selected multinational corporations in South-South Nigeria. The eight multinational corporations include Shell Petroleum Development Company, Chevron Texaco Nigeria limited, Mobil Oil Company, Coca-cola, Julius Berger, MTN, 9Mobile and the Nigerian Agip oil company. These multinationals are situated in these areas as a result of the nearness to raw materials, quality labour and other purposes.
It is assumed that the responses obtained from the sample respondents would be representative of the opinions of all the managerial and non-managerial employees of the multinational corporations. A descriptive research design was used in executing the study using 92 selected sample respondents in the multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria. The core aspect of the study was the use of cross sectional survey research design in generating the required primary data. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The questionnaire was designed to obtain a fair representation of the opinions of 92 sample respondents using a five-point Likert type scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA)-5 points, Agree (A)-4 points, Undecided (UD)-3 points, Disagree (D)-2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD)-1 point. The questionnaire responses of the sample respondents were represented using tables, while formulated hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient and the T-test at 0.05% level.

3.1 Analysis and Results
The analysis was carried out in accordance with the research questions. In each case, the responses to the questionnaire questions were scored with the mean and standard deviation. A mean response cut-off score 2.50, (i.e. (5+4+3+2+1)/5 was adopted. Responses to the various questions were obtained from the analyzed statements and the results as shown in the table below. The first section was on the preliminary presentation of data which involved the demographic characters. The second section was on research questions, while the last section was the test of hypotheses of the multinational corporations in South- South, Nigeria.

3.2 Presentation of Data
This section presented the demographic characteristics of the respondents-gender, age distribution, education/qualification and length of service. Percentages were used to describe the outcome.

Table 1  Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>65.2</td>
<td>65.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data 2019

In table 1, out of the 92 respondents of the sex distribution, 60 respondents representing 62.2% are males, while 32 respondents representing 34.8% are females. This shows that majority of the respondents are males in multinational corporations.

Table 2  Age Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25-40</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>62.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-60</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data 2019
In table 2, out of the total of 92 respondents, there are 57 respondents who are aged between 25-40 years representing 62.0% of the total respondents. In the age bracket between 41-60 years, there are 35 respondents representing 38.0%. It is evidenced that majority of the employees in multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria are 62.0%. This means that the employees are young and active.

### Table 3  Educational Qualification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Qualification</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OND</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HND</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master Degree and above</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>92</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data 2019

In table 3, it shows that 6 respondents with Ordinary National Diploma represents about 6.5%, 12 respondents with Higher National Diploma represents 13.0% of the total respondents. In the case of bachelor degree as educational qualification, 21 respondents represent 22.9%. 53 of the respondents with the highest qualification of Master degree and above, represents 57.6% of the total respondents This reveals that majority of the respondents (57.6%) have Master degree and above.

### Table 4  Length of Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Service</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 5 years</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>76.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 10 years</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>92</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data 2019

In table 4, the length of service of the respondents shows that employees below 5 years are 28, representing 30.4% of the total respondents. The respondents in the bracket of 5-10 years of service are 42; representing 45.7% of the entire respondents, while the respondents in above 10 years of service are 22, represent 23.9% of the total respondents. This means that the majority of the respondents representing 45.7% are in the service of 5-10 years.

### 3.3 Analysis and Results of Research Questions
Responses to what are the effects of conflict management strategies on employee behaviour?

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/ N</th>
<th>Descriptive Statistics</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responses to what are the conflicts of interest on employee behavior?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Personality interests of the employee</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lack of information among employees</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bringing family interest to the organization</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Gifts/benefits to the employees undermining the organization’s interest</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Utilization of the organization’s resources for the benefit of the employees</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responses to what are the causes of conflict on the managerial/ non managerial perception?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Poor organization structure</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Personality clash or ego problem</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Poor communication/miscommunication</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Lack of cordial relationship between labor and management</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Repetitive negative behavior of employees</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In table 5, a stratified sample size of 92 respondents was used. Questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents. With the mean response cut-off of 2.50 and the standard deviation, sixteen variables were used in the questions. The standard deviation is a measure of the spread of scores within a set of data. Here, we are interested in sample deviation. The response to the conflicts of interest also has five variables. Personality interest of the employees has the highest mean score of 3.97 with the standard deviation of 1.88. Gifts/benefits to the employees undermining the organization’s interest have the lowest mean score of 3.42 with a standard deviation of 1.65.

Causes of conflict response have five variables. Personality clash or ego problem has the highest mean score of 3.90 with the standard deviation of 1.87. Poor organizational structure has the lowest mean score of 3.17 with a standard deviation of 1.59. This means that the major cause of conflict in multinational corporations is poor organizational structure.

Finally, the response from conflict management resolutions has six variables, which include constant dialogue, compromising, avoidance, re-orientation, dominating and problem solving. Constant dialogue has the highest mean score of 4.16 with a standard deviation of 2.05. While dominating by force by the superior on the other parties has the lowest mean score of 2.70 with a standard deviation of 1.62. This means that the best strategy for conflict resolutions in manufacturing industry is constant dialogue. The least accepted one is dominating by force by the top management.

### 4.1 Hypotheses Testing and Results

**H01:** There is no significant relationship between the employee conflict of interests and employee behaviour in selected multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria.

A 5-point Likert scale was used with the following response categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses to what are the conflict management resolutions on employee behavior?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conflict Management Resolutions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Constant dialogue</td>
<td>4.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Compromising</td>
<td>3.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Avoidance</td>
<td>2.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Re-orientation</td>
<td>3.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Dominating by force by the superior on the other party</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Problem solving</td>
<td>3.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strongly Agree (SA) ......................... 5 points  
Agree (A) ................................. 4 Points  
Undecided (UD) ............................. 3 Points  
Disagree (D) ............................... 2 Points  
Strongly Disagree (SD) ................... 1 Point

Table 6: Calculation of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>X point</th>
<th>Y responses</th>
<th>XY</th>
<th>X²</th>
<th>Y²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>2638</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[
r = \frac{5 \cdot (357) - (15) \cdot (92)}{\sqrt{5(55) - (15)^2 \cdot 5(2638 - (92)^2)}}
\]

\[r = 0.8333\]

The above result shows that there is a positive significant relationship between the conflict of interests and employee behaviour in selected multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria. For further test, there is need to justify the stated hypothesis. As a result, the test of significance will be employed.

\[
t_{cal} = \frac{r}{\sqrt{1 - r^2}}
\]

\[
t_{cal} = \frac{0.8333}{\sqrt{1 - (0.8333)^2}}
\]

\[t_{cal} = 2.61\]

\[t_{tab} = n-2, @ 0.05 = 5-2, @ 0.05 = 3 \cdot 0.05 \]

\[\therefore t_{tab} = 2.35\]

The decision rule is to reject H02 if tcal is > tab.

Since tcal is > tab, H02 is rejected which, means that there is positive significant relationship between the conflict of interests and employee behaviour in multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria.

The findings in this study indicates that the various conflicts of interests among employees resulting to individual differences include belief, background, abilities, perceptions, roles, attitudes, work environment etc. The conflict of interests could result among the employees
or between management and employees in the multinational corporations. The conflict management managers should know when such issues arise and also apply modalities of resolving such conflicts. In multinational corporations, there are conflicts of interests among employees at the same level; compromising and avoiding strategies are applied because the employees are assumed to be at the same level.

In conflict of interests between a managerial staff and non-managerial staff, the dominating and accommodating strategies are applied. This is so because the managerial staff has positional supremacy over the non-managerial staff. This same approach also results in the conflict of interests between the management and the employee in multinational corporations.

**H02:** There is no significant relationship between the causes of conflict and the managerial/non-managerial perception in selected multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria.

### Table 7: Calculation of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>X point</th>
<th>Y responses</th>
<th>X Y</th>
<th>X²</th>
<th>Y²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>92</strong></td>
<td><strong>365</strong></td>
<td><strong>55</strong></td>
<td><strong>2744</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[
r = \frac{5(365) - (15)(92)}{\sqrt{5(55) - (15)^2} \cdot 5(2744) - (92)^2}}
\]

\[r = 0.8674\]

The result above shows that there is a positive significant relationship between the causes of conflict and employee perception in selected multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria. To justify the stated hypothesis, there is greater need for further test. As a result of this, the test of significance will be employed.

\[
t_{cal} = \frac{r}{\sqrt{1 - r^2}}
\]

\[t_{cal} = \frac{0.8674}{\sqrt{1 - (0.8674)^2}} = 3.02\]

\[tab = n-2, @ 0.05, = 52, @ 0.05, = 3, @ 0.05\]
\[ \therefore tab = 2.35 \]

Decision rule is to reject H03 if \( t_{\text{cal}} \) is > \( t_{\text{tab}} \).

Since \( t_{\text{cal}} \) is > \( t_{\text{tab}} \), H03 is rejected which means that there is positive significant relationship between the causes of conflict and employee perception in selected multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria. The findings in this study indicate that employees in the multinational corporations are aware of the various causes of conflict. It is paramount for the management to apply the necessary conflict management strategies to either eradicate the conflicts or resolve them. In practice, management examines the root causes of conflict, its consequences, the principal actors, before proffering solutions to resolve the conflict.

**H0 3**: There is no significant relationship between the conflict management resolution and the employee behaviour in selected multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria.

**Table 8: Calculation of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>X point</th>
<th>Y responses</th>
<th>X Y</th>
<th>X^2</th>
<th>Y^2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>2,476</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ r = \frac{5 \cdot (352) - (15) \cdot (92)}{\sqrt{5 \cdot (55) - (15)^2} \cdot 5 \cdot (2476-(92)^2}} \]

\[ r = 0.8597 \]

The result above shows that there is a positive significant relationship between conflict management resolution and the employee behaviour in selected multinational corporations in South-South Nigeria. But there is also the need to test further so as to justify the stated hypothesis. In this case, the test of significance will be employed.

\[ t_{\text{cal}} = \frac{r}{\sqrt{1 - r^2}} \]

\[ t_{\text{cal}} = \frac{0.8597}{\sqrt{1 - (0.8597)^2}} \]

\[ t_{\text{cal}} = 2.92 \]

\[ \text{tab}=n-2, @0.05=5-2@0.05,=3@0.05 \]

\[ \therefore \text{tab} = 2.35 \]
The decision rule is to reject H04 if tcal is > tab. Since tcal is > tab, H04 is rejected which means that there is positive significant relationship between the conflict of management resolution and the employee behaviour in selected multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria.

The findings in this study indicate that multinational corporations resolve conflicts among employees and between management and employees through conflict management strategies like avoiding, compromising, problem solving, and dominating etc. Conflicts can also be resolved through the structuring of management policies, so as to adjust the new system that would cope with the organizational environment. Other methods for reconciliation include mediation, conciliation and arbitration.

4.2 Conclusion
The study examined conflict management strategy and employee behaviour in selected multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria. The study revealed that there was positive and significant relationship between the conflict management strategy and the employee behaviour in selected multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria. The managers of the multinational corporations should identify the conflict management strategies, observe the conflict of interests of the employees, take note of the causes of conflict and apply modalities of resolving the causes of the conflict, so that there would be efficiency, productivity and good relationship among the employees and between management and employees in the multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria.

4.3 Recommendations
In view of the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were proposed on conflict management strategy on employee behaviour in selected multinational corporations in South-South, Nigeria.

1. The management should apply conflict management strategies judiciously in such a way that it could be favourable to both the employee and the management.
2. There should be regular meetings in the organization in order to identify and resolve labour /management issues that could result in labor unrest.
3. Multinational corporations should identify the various conflicts of interests in relation to employee productivity in the workplace.
4. Management should identify the root causes of conflict in the multinational corporations and notify the principal actors of the conflict by determining the consequences of the conflict and settle the conflict amicably and productively.
5. There must be established channels of communication between the employees and management, so as to understand the set down policies of the organization.
6. Adequate and regular training should be given to the employees so as to eliminate ignorance and minimize areas of friction between management and the employees.
7. Strict implementation of collective agreement should be adhered to between management and its workers.
8. Multinational corporations should be in compliance to the payment of minimum wage legislation policy to its employees. Government should regulate and ensure that these policies are adhered to.
References


