

Collaboration Strategy and Organizational Health of Federal Agencies in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study examined the use of collaboration strategy and its impact on organizational health of some selected Federal Agencies in Rivers, namely Niger Delta Development Commission, Niger Delta Basin Authority, Ministry of Niger Delta and National Emergency Management Authority. The research design used to carry out the study was the cross sectional survey. The sample size of 201 employees was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan table. Also, the sampling technique used was the simple random sampling technique. Questionnaires were constructed to measure all the indicators of the conflict management style, and organizational health and these were administered to the respondents in order to extract data for analysis. Multiple regression statistics was used to test the hypotheses. The findings revealed that there is a positive and significant association between collaboration strategy and cohesiveness; also it was revealed from the findings that there is a positive and significant association between collaboration strategy and problem solving. It is then concluded that because the employees of these Federal agencies exhibited the attributes of collaboration strategy, the health of the organization was strengthened. Sequel to the above findings and conclusion, recommendations were made for Managers on the need to educate and train employees on the immense benefits of collaboration strategy on their personal wellbeing and the overall benefits to the health of the organization. Also, Managers and directors in Federal Agencies and by extension all other Federal establishments should strive to encourage their employees to do their best by using the concept of collaboration conflict resolution strategy to enhance their organizational health*

Key words: *Conflict, Management, Styles, Organizations, Health.*

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Introduction

Conflicts in organizations have destabilizing consequence on the overall performance of the organization. It leads to under performance since valuable time, human and material resources are used in managing and controlling conflicts rather than to improve output and productivity. Conflicts also lead to interpersonal misunderstanding among staff in an organization which makes accomplishment of organizational set goals difficult. Attaining organizational goals is possible if efforts are always made to trim down the overall level of conflict within the organization. Consequently, it is very important that efforts should be made towards finding ways of managing conflicts among staff so as to achieve organizational objectives. The problem of poor conflict management styles in organizations with particular emphasis on Federal

agencies is the focus of this study. Federal agencies are establishments or organizations owned or partly controlled by the Federal Government of Nigeria. Examples of such agencies in Rivers state include; the Niger Delta Development Commission, Niger Delta Basin Authority, Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs. All these agencies are created through an act of legislation with their corresponding mandate geared towards the functionality of the establishment. These Federal agencies are responsible for delivering various types of Government services. Each of these agencies is headed by personnel who could be a chairman or a director. Like other privately owned co-operations or establishments, Federal agencies have had their own fair share of challenges. These agencies like other establishments that have their own organizational structure may not be different from other organizations in terms of administrative formation and other operational performance. As it is well noted, these formations comprise of staff working at different levels and capacity due to difference in background and other demographic characteristics, sometime there must be differentiated character of contemporary work-organizations. These differentiated characters of contemporary work-organizations are some of the causes of conflict within an organization.

Similarly, Obasi (2005) observed that there are intra-management conflicts which occur between and among groups of workers within the organization as well as between individuals. Ahemefula (2014) also confirmed that conflicts are integral parts of the origin of every organization, especially a situation where men and women that constitute the staff of these organizations have different cultural, religious, status, lifestyle and political background. In another development, Longe (2015) pointed out that workplace conflict is thus endemic despite the best of management practices in organizations. He further opined that this manifest in various forms as an intrinsic and unavoidable feature of employment relationship. It is by nature an ever present process and more often to occur in hierarchical organizations where people with different views, opinion and background interact. It is against this background we examine the impact of collaboration conflict management strategy on organizational health using a survey of Federal agencies in Rivers State. The study examined collaboration conflict management strategy and organizational health in Federal Interventionists agencies in Rivers State Nigeria as against other studies that have considered other co-operate and public organizations

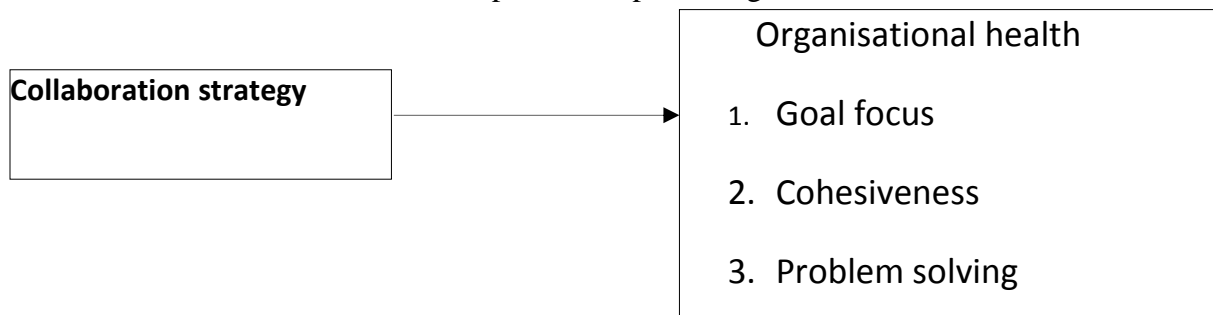


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of collaboration strategy and organizational health

Source: Researchers (2019)

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine the effect of collaboration strategy on organizational health of selected Federal Agencies in Rivers State, Nigeria. The objectives were:

6. To examine the association between collaboration strategy and goal focus in Federal agencies in Rivers State.
7. To analyze the association between collaboration strategy and cohesiveness in Federal

- agencies in Rivers State.
8. To study the association between collaboration strategy and problem solving in Federal agencies in Rivers State

Research Questions

- (i) To what extent does collaboration strategy associate with goal focus in Federal agencies in Rivers State?
- (ii) At what level does collaboration strategy associate with cohesiveness in Federal agencies in Rivers State?
- (iii) What is the magnitude of association between collaboration strategy and problem solving in Federal agencies in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

- Ho₁:** Collaboration strategy is not associated with goal focus in Federal Agencies in Rivers State.
- Ho₂:** Collaboration strategy is not associated with cohesiveness in Federal Agencies in Rivers State.
- Ho₃:** Collaboration strategy is not associated with Problems solving in Federal Agencies in Rivers State.

Literature Review

Collaboration Strategy

Liam and Rashad (2012) see collaboration strategy as an approach to resolving conflict in the best solution or interest that is agreeable to all parties. It is commonly referred to as problem-solving style. It is usually used when the main concern is to satisfy both parties amicably. It is highly assertive and highly cooperative; the goal is to find a “win/win” solution. Appropriate uses for the collaborating style includes integrating solutions, learning, merging perspectives, gaining commitment and improving relationships. Using this style can support open discussion of issues, task proficiency, equal distribution of works among team members, better brainstorming and development of creative problem solving. Flanagan and Runde, (2008) observed that using the collaboration style, issues are attended to openly, frankly and neutrally by communicating with all the parties.

Montoya-Weiss et al., (2001) confirmed that one of the advantages of using this style is that all the parties in conflicts are usually happy with the final decision.

Organizational Health

The concept of organizational health could be likened to a metaphor which assesses overall performance of an organization and offers new approaches by putting the employee health and welfare in the forefront of the organization. In the context of this study, the literature on organization health can be suggested to have developed with three different approaches focused on enterprise performance, on employee health, and on both enterprise performance and employee health.

Goal Focus

McKinsey (1999) in his organizational health index (OHI) posits that goal focus is the ability of persons, groups, or organizations to have clarity, acceptance, support, and advocacy of organizational wide goals and objectives. In the present study we distinguish accordingly between two kinds of goal focus. If the relevant goal is for each individual participant to perform as well as possible, goal interdependence will be negative, constituting an individual goal focus. If in contrast the relevant goal is that the group as a whole performs as well as possible, goal

interdependence will be positive, constituting a group goal focus. With a group goal focus, each participant is accountable not only for her or his individual success, but also for the performance of the other participants as well.

Cohesiveness

Group cohesiveness has consistently remained one of the most interesting and most elusive constructs in the study of small group behavior, stimulating active research interests in social psychology, group dynamics, organizational behavior, and sport psychology. Festinger, Schachter and Back (1950) described group cohesiveness as "the resultant forces which are acting on the members to stay in a group," and most subsequent research on group cohesiveness has tended to accept this description. Mudrak (1989) describes a cohesive group as one which "sticks together, one which its members are "bonded" to one another and the group as a whole, he further posits that cohesiveness would probably be accompanied by feelings of "commitment", "harmony" and "solidarity" on the part of the group members.

Problem Solving

This has to do with an organization's ability to perceive problems and to solve them with negligible energy. Problems get solved, stay solved and the problem solving procedures are strengthened.

Relationship between collaboration strategy and the health of organizations

In order for an organization to exhibit its characteristics of being goal focused and display high level of cohesiveness in our highly conflicted business environment of today, it is eminent that certain conflict management strategies such as collaboration between individuals or teams must be put into consideration as goals are products of team work. Salami (2009) views collaboration strategy as a combination of both high levels of assertive and cooperative dimensions and also involves a win-win position, and when parties are satisfied they tend to come up with creative solutions which enhances problem solving. Furthermore, Montero-Rodriguez, Small and McCallum (2006) reported that nurses' job satisfaction, psychological morale and occupational stress were influenced by conflict resolution strategies, and when all these are in place, creativity comes to bear and the employees are focused on the goals of the organization. Similarly, some studies have linked conflict resolution strategies with work performance or work indicators (Meyer et al., 2005).

Methodology

The study adopted cross sectional survey design. The method was considered appropriate because the data were collected directly from the target population of 420 officers who make up the top, middle and lower management of the Federal agencies in view as the study is a macro study with the unit of analysis at the organizational level. The sample size for the study is made up of 201 staff determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. In testing the reliability of the instruments, the researcher adopted the test-retest method using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis which yields a reliability co-efficient which will be considered as an acceptable reliability co-efficient for the study. The data was analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions while spearman rank order correlation coefficient was used in analyzing the research Hypotheses. This was tested at the 0.05 level of significance in order to arrive at an appropriate decision.

Data Analysis and Results

Bivariate Analysis

The secondary data analysis was carried out using the spearman rank order correlation tool. In testing the hypotheses for this study, the following decision rules were maintained in rejecting or accepting the study alternate hypotheses and they include: all the correlation coefficients r values that indicate the level of significance (* or **) as calculated using SPSS, * mean (0.01) and (**)mean (0.05), and the hypotheses will be accepted or rejected on the basis of this condition. When no significance is indicated in the coefficient (r) values, we reject alternate hypothesis. However, the study confident interval was set at the 0.05 (one tailed) level of significance of the test of statistical significance of the data used in the study.

Table 1 contains the detailed results of correlation matrix obtained for collaboration and organizational health. Also, displayed in the table is the statistical test of significance (p - value), which makes the study able to answer the research questions and generalize its findings related to the study population.

Table 1: Correlation Matrix for the Association between Collaboration and Organizational Health

		Collaboration	Goal Focus	Cohesiveness	Problem Solving	
Spearman's rho	Collaboration	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.958**	.900**	1.000**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.
		N	191	191	191	191
	Goal Focus	Correlation Coefficient	.958**	1.000	.971**	.958**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	191	191	191	191
	Cohesiveness	Correlation Coefficient	.900**	.971**	1.000	.900**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	191	191	191	191
	Problem Solving	Correlation Coefficient	1.000**	.958**	.900**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.
		N	191	191	191	191

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Source : Research Data

From table 1, it is shown that there is a positive and significant association between collaboration and goal focus, collaboration and cohesiveness, collaboration and problem solving. Therefore the null hypotheses are rejected as the p value is significant; as a result the alternate hypotheses are adopted and stated below:

H₀₁: Collaboration is significantly and positively associated to goal focus ($r = 0.958$, $P = 0.000 < 0.05$).

H₀₂: Collaboration is significantly and positively associated to cohesiveness ($r = 0.900$, $P = 0.000 < 0.05$).

H₀₃: Collaboration is significantly and positively associated to problem solving ($r = 1.000$, $p = 0.000 < 0.01$).

Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a positive association between collaboration strategy and the measures of organizational health.

Discussion of Findings

We found that employees of Federal Agencies in Rivers State, Nigeria exhibited collaboration strategy at work. This simply means that such employees are always willing to work harmoniously with their colleagues to ensure that the organization goals are achieved and this finding corroborates the study of Runde (2008). In Runde (2008), it was found that collaboration conflict resolution strategy uses win-win approach to solve conflict among workers in the organization. Also, it was found that there exists positive and significant association between collaboration and goal focus, cohesiveness and problem solving in Federal interventionist agencies in Rivers State.

Sequel to these facts, the results so obtained showed positive and significant association between collaboration conflict resolution strategy and goal focus. This becomes visible as employees' exhibitions of this behavior make the organization achieve her mission and vision. He further opined that collaboration could be termed problem – solving style.

Conclusion

In conclusion, points were reached covering the research questions that were extracted from the main purpose of the study. Therefore, the conclusion for this study is that yes there is indeed significant and positive association between collaboration strategy and the measures of organizational health in these Federal agencies in Rivers State. So collaboration strategy is significantly and positively associated with organizational health.

Recommendations

1. Managers and directors in Federal Agencies and by extension all other Federal establishments should strive to encourage their employees to do their best by using the concept of collaboration conflict resolution strategy to enhance their organizational health and this will be possible if all employees are aware of management polices and sanctions as well as contributions towards decision-making in the organization. This will eliminate administrative bottle neck

1. Managers need to educate and train employees on the immense benefits of collaboration strategy on their personal wellbeing and the overall benefits to the health of the organization.
2. Directors/managers in Federal agencies in Rivers State need to adopt as part of their recruitment and selection practices to hire applicants that exhibit collaborative behaviors such as team spirit that could be likened to conflict resolution strategies as stated in the study, this makes it easier for the employee to understand the concept of collaboration.
- 3.

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