

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE USE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES BY HEADS OF DEPARTMENT IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES, IN SOUTH - SOUTH, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated gender differences in the use of organizational conflict resolution strategies by Heads of Department in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria. The population of the study was all 360 Heads of Department (HODs) distributed into six Federal Universities in South – South Nigeria. The sample size was 343 HODs purposively selected from five Universities in South – South Nigeria. Three research questions and three hypotheses were used to guide the study. Researchers, made instrument titled “Gender Differences in the Use of Organizational Conflict Resolution Questionnaire (GDOCRO) was used for data collection. An ex-post facto design was used for the study. Mean and independent t-test were used for data analysis. Findings reveal that male and female Heads of Department significantly differ in the use of collaboration mediation and dominance resolution strategies.

Keywords: Gender Differences, Organizational Conflict, Resolution Strategies, Heads of Department, Federal Universities.

INTRODUCTION

An objective view of society essentially reveals the co-existence of male and female in social interactions all over the world. Yet, very many cultures around the world are patriarchal in nature, which shows clearly a situation where men are always in control of most of the public and private sectors of the economy, thus subjecting the female folks to unfair treatments in social relations. Against this background, several cultures had made a belief on female passive existence. However, in a bid to sustain the tempo of gender differences, Onyeonoru (2005) recalled in 1976 University of Sussex workshop on the subordination of women based on sex differentials. According to this scholar, sex is biologically determined, while gender is socially constructed. On the other hand, gender is a social construct that explains the women subordination as a result of domineering disposition of men.

The belief has always been that women’s first priority was to take care of their families. The unmarried ones were likely to get out of the family to the husbands’ homes as soon as they get married, while married ones were also in temporary employment, likely to get out of work as they become pregnant (Sopio, Koulaninga and Moga, 2003). This gave the impression that women were not at any point ready to take up public responsibility on a permanent basis. Beyond this, women were not seen as being capable either physically, mentally or emotionally to face the challenges of public office. In recognition of this disadvantaged position of the female folk across societies and the developing countries in

particular, the United Nations (UN) set aside the years 1975-1985 as the development decade for the recognition and inclusion of women potentials in public and private offices.

With equal access to formal education, labour force participation of women was enhanced. This vantage position of women in terms of formal education has broadened their experiences, skills and impetus to cope with public life challenges. (Amuseghan 2007). For example, most educated women are now participating in work situations such as in tertiary institutions and their contribution have bridged the gap that had existed as a result of their inclusion from the public service such as military, para-military, civil service and various research training centers even here in Nigeria and the South-South Zone of the country.

However, the campaigns for equal access to opportunities and participation of women in public institutions have thrown up several female administrators (such as Vice-Chancellors, Deans of Faculties, and Academic Heads of Departments) in the University system in South-South, Nigeria and beyond. This trend has witnessed the appointment of female and male Heads of Departments to provide academic and administrative leadership at the level of University administration. Mreela (2009) observed that management functions expected at the level of the Head of Department entail the act of running and controlling human and material resource for the achievement of the university goal. In line with this argument Olaopa (2008) noted that providing managerial function within public organization such as the university introduces standardization of tasks. This requires members of staff to come together with their individual orientation differences with a high risk of conflict of interest. Best (2009) conceived conflict as a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power, resources in which the actions of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals.

Essentially, university administrative structure comprises male and female administrators with well defined positions and roles. In the departments (HODs) provide academic and administrative leadership which suggest commanding and coordinating the performance of others. In practice, some of these functions overlap. In the course of interaction with and between personnels of the departmental structure in the university, cultural, biological and needs differences inherent in humans are displayed. These differences may culminate into personal conflicts among departmental and Faculty members. Conflict may be viewed as a negative situation which develops from pride, self- concept, ego and sense of mission since no man is an island, and since man must mingle with others, conflict must occur.

The authors hereby conceptualized conflict as a way of setting problems originating from opposing group and for continuity of group interest.

Every school has an optimal level of conflict that can be considered functional and which helps to generate positive performance. When conflict is understood as a difference of wants, needs or expectations, it can be a catalyst for new discoveries, innovative collaborations and unique solutions to seemingly insurmountable problems. (Oudeh, 2007).

Sanja (2009) asserted that men approach problem in a very different manner than women. For most men, solving a problem presents an opportunity to demonstrate the competence, and strength than their commitment to a relationship. Amason (1996) contended that women are more willing to listen and compromise while men tend to have more of a risk-taking style, highly aggressive and power play, resorting to higher authorities shunning less commonly collaboration strategy. Duze (2012) in his studies found out that women and men differed in the ways that they talked about their conflicts. Women talked indepth and at length about the context of the conflict, particularly focusing on their involvement in the relationship with the

other party. Men use more rational, linear and legalistic language to talk about their disputes. Duze, (2012) concluded that women are peace-makers in organization.

Fasoranti (2007) found out that women managers do not differ from male managers in preferred conflict resolution strategy but women administrators differed from non-managerial counterparts. The situation demands investigation into the contradictory views to expose reality. Best (2009) posited that parties in conflict work with each other to find a solution that is satisfactory to both of them. This involves the use of dialogue in which the parties listens actively and gain understanding of the other party as well as their own. That understanding enable them to develop a solution that satisfies the concern of both parties. It is a situation where both parties win; this is more socially adaptive as it leads to a situation that is acceptable to the parties involved.

Cetin(2005) opined that collaboration strategy of conflict resolution is considered as an ideal method of settling conflict. The strategy works well because its goal is to achieve a “win/win” solution and to facilitate this type of conflict resolution. It is critical that both sides receive plenty of information about each other so that competent decisions can be made. This means that both sides must be honest and open in their dealings. Collaboration conflict strategy works best when both sides trust each other and understand that they are working toward a common goal. Also, it is critical that each side is effective at listening and processing the arguments and points that the other side is making.

Dominance as a social influence is typically equated with the ability to persuade others, to elicit compliance, and to move people into action Hamdem (2004). According to Best (2009), dominance is a strategy of dealing with conflict derived from the dispersions of people to asset themselves in situations. Here, there is little or no interest in the well being or interest of the other person (party). It is all about the person and the person alone. In a given conflict then, one party that is assertive tries to totally “eclipse” the other party in a way. It is an attempt to deny the rights of the other person. The primary motivation in domination is the desire to win, and therefore, make the other party to lose. Thus, the assertive party behaves in a manner to suppress the views of the other party by using strong arguments or emphasizing its rank or economic position.

Bush (2009) asserted mediation as a form of facilitated dialogue whereby a third party intervener sits at a venue with disputants and tries to guide them through their dispute and jointly arrive at consensus term of settlement. Clark (2009) contended that during the facilitation of the face-to-face meeting or conversation between the parties, the mediator will implement a process consisting of several stages. The number of stages is dependent on the particular mediation model that is applied by a mediator. The mediator could be contracted for a full mediation process or a part of the mediation process.

In mediatory channel, Gayle (1994) asserted that female mediator acted by coming between combatants in conflict seeking to minimize the conflict between the parties involved in the conflict. The mediator possessed the attributes of honesty, fairness or impartiality and credibility.

Adomi (2007) consented also that mediation is a skill that many people have, but which they hardly realize they do. When two friends have a disagreement, for instance, and the line of communication broken, a common friend could be a mediator in relationship. This can move on to higher levels of relationship at the group. The objective of mediation is to help parties to a conflict. The role of the mediator is to create the enabling environment for the parties to carry out dialogue sessions leading to the resolution of a pending conflict. Mediation is

popular and quite productive and helpful in settling conflicts that would have otherwise escalated easily. The concern of this study then is how can conflicts be resolved by Heads of Departments in Federal Universities in South-South Zone of Nigeria. Using the above discussed conflict resolution strategies.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of the study is to determine the difference between male and female Heads of Department and their use of conflict resolution strategies in South – South Federal Universities. Specifically, the objectives of the study sought to:

1. Determine the differences in the use of collaboration strategy in conflict resolution between male and female Heads of Department in South – South Universities.
2. Determine the difference in the use of dominance resolution strategy in conflict resolution between male and female Head of Department in South – South Universities.
3. Find out how male and female Heads of Department differ in the use of mediation strategy in conflict resolution in South-South Universities.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference in the use of collaboration strategy in conflict resolution between male and female Heads of Department in South-South Federal Universities in Nigeria?
2. What is the difference in the use of dominance strategy in conflict resolution between male and female Heads of Department in South-South federal Universities?
3. How do male and female Heads of Department differ in conflict resolution using deviation resolution strategy in South-South Federal Universities?

NULL HYPOTHESES

To guide the study, the hypotheses were stated in a null, form as follows:

1. There is no significant difference in the use of collaboration strategy in resolving conflict in Federal Universities between male and female Heads of Department in South – South, Nigeria.
2. Male and female Heads of Department do not differ significantly in the use of dominance strategy for conflict resolution in the Federal Universities of the South – South, Nigeria.
3. Male and female Heads of Department do not differ significantly in use of mediation strategy for conflict resolution in Federal University of the South-South Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The area of study is the South-South Zone of Nigeria and an ex-post facto research design was used to conduct the study. The variables in this study were, gender differences and the use of organization conflict resolution strategies which the researchers used the design to determine their level of differences. The population of the study comprised all 300 males and

60 females totaling 360 Heads of Departments of the six Federal Universities in the South-South Zone of Nigeria.(2015/2016 academic session). The study sample comprised 343 (95%) heads of departments in all the Federal Universities in the South-South Zone of Nigeria. A simple random sampling technique was used for the sampling. Five (5) federal universities was first randomly sampled using hat and draw method from the existing six universities in south-south Nigeria.

Then, all the Heads of Department in the sampled universities were purposively used for the study.

A structured questionnaire tagged Gender Difference in Organizational Conflicts Questionnaire (GDOCRQ) constructed by the researchers was used for gathering information for Heads of Departments. Any HOD who scored 2.5 and above on any strategy was accepted and below this level was dropped from the study. The instrument was validated by research experts in the department of Educational Management, University of Uyo, Split-half method was used to determine the internal consistency reliability of the instrument while Cronbach Alpha Analytical method used showed a reliability coefficient of .82 and the instrument was adjudged reliable for the study.

Mean and independent t-test were used for analysis of the data collected. Research questions were answered using the mean while the hypotheses were tested using the t-test at .05 alpha level.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Means and standard deviation were used to answer all the research questions in this study.

Research Question 1

What is the difference in the use of collaboration strategy in conflict resolution between male and female Heads of Department in South – South Federal Universities of Nigeria?

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation for use of Collaboration Strategy between male and female Heads of Department

<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	\bar{X}	<i>SD</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Male	196	13.04	3.48	In favour of female
Female	147	14.21	3.34	

N = 343

Data in Table 1 shows that female Heads of Department used collaboration strategy much more than men in resolving conflict.

Research Question 2

What is the difference in the use of dominance strategy in conflict resolution between male and female Heads of Department in South – South Federal Universities?

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation for use of Dominance for conflicts resolution between male and female head of department

<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	\bar{X}	<i>SD</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Male	196	15.31	3.38	In favour of female
Female	147	11.07	4.06	

N = 343

Data in Table 2 indicates that male Heads of Department utilized dominance strategy in resolving conflict more than female Heads of Department.

Research Question 3

How do male and female heads of department differ in conflict resolution using mediation strategy in South-South Federal Universities?

Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviation for use of mediation strategy for conflict resolution of male and female heads of departments

<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	\bar{X}	<i>SD</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Male	196	16.78	4.11	In favour of male
Female	147	14.94	3.84	

N = 343

The mean for male and female heads of department of 16.78 and 14.94 respectively indicated that both groups differ in their use of mediation for conflict resolution since the mean for male heads of department was greater than that of female heads of department. It revealed that male heads of department used mediation more in resolving conflicts than their female counter parts.

Hypotheses Testing

Table 4. T-test of difference in the use of collaboration strategy in resolving conflict between male and female Heads of Department

<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	\bar{X}	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-cal</i>	<i>t-crit</i>	<i>Decision</i>
Male	196	13.04	3.48			Rejected
Female	147	14.21	3.34	-3.50	1.96	

= significant at $p < .05$

The null hypothesis was rejected since the calculated t of 3.50 was greater than the critical t of 1.96 at df of 341 and .05 level of significance. Therefore, male and female heads of department differed significantly in their utilization of collaboration strategy in resolving conflict. The negative sign just indicates that the mean for female heads of department was greater than that of male.

Hypotheses 2

Male and female heads of departments do not differ significantly in the use of dominance strategy for conflict resolution in the Federal Universities of the South-South, Nigeria

Table 5. T-test of difference in the use of dominance strategy in resolving conflict between male and female heads of departments

<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	\bar{X}	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-cal</i>	<i>t-crit</i>	<i>Decision</i>
Male	196	15.31	3.38			Rejected
Female	147	11.07	4.06	11.346	1.96	

= significant at $P < .05$

The null hypothesis was rejected because the calculated t of 11.46 was greater than the critical t of 1.96 at df of 341 and .05 level of significance. Therefore, male and female heads of department differed significantly in their utilization of dominance strategy in resolving conflict.

Hypotheses 3

Male and female heads of department do not differ significantly in the use of mediation for conflict-resolution in Federal Universities of the South-South, Nigeria.

Table 6. T-test of difference in the use of mediation in resolution of conflict between male and female heads of departments

<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	\bar{X}	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-cal</i>	<i>t-crit</i>	<i>Decision</i>
Male	196	16.78	4.11			Rejected
Female	147	14.94	3.84	3.35	1.96	

= significant at $P < .05$

The null hypothesis was rejected because the calculated t of 3.35 was greater than the critical t of 1.96 at df of 341 and .05 level of significance. Therefore male and female heads of department differed significantly in their use of mediation in conflict resolution.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Use of Collaboration Strategy in Resolving Conflict

The results of the analysis of data attest to the fact that male and female HODS differ significantly in their utilization of collaboration strategy in resolving conflict with female using it more than male. This is supported by Ayodele (2007) who opined that female HODS are fond of using collaboration strategy in resolving conflict. This is also natural because females generally like resolving conflicts using strategy that is collaborating to both parties.

Use of Dominance Strategy in Resolving Conflict

The result of the analysis showed that male and female HODS differ significantly in the use of dominance strategy in resolving conflict with male using it more than female. The result supports the findings of Banducci, and Susan (2005) who maintained that male HODS like to

show their masculine nature by using dominance strategy in resolving conflict. Banducci (2005) added that men and women have inherently different innate qualities, and that women have more natural tendencies towards peaceful methods of conflict resolution than men and masculine nature bring it to bear even in resolving conflict. Goldstein (2004) claimed that men are relatively violent and women relatively peaceful, due to women's care giving roles" and potential for motherhood, women are more inclined to oppose war and be more interested in peace-making. Adomi, (2007) on the discussion of how motherhood is conceptualized as the antithesis of violence, mother's duty to educate peace in creating positive relationships in all aspects of the child's life. Adomi asserted that female have non-violent vision. Okoya (2009) also supported that female avoid taking the 'furtle approach' when feeling pushed or threatened.

Adewumi (2007) asserted that male managers dominate in bringing conflict under control when they use "force or threats and commands the parties involved to stop quarreling and star working together normally, adewumi (2007) is based on the need to intimidate while added that male managers are likely to emphasize power and authority as their initial course of action in order to resolve conflicts with their subordinates. Male have exerting control over other people when they feel need to reclaim power and so men dominate more than women.

The Use of Mediation Strategy in Resolving Conflict

The result of the analysis revealed that male HODS used mediation more in resolving conflict than their female counter-part, Bush (2009) amongst other authors suggested that male uses more rational, linear language to talk about issues of justice and adopt a broaden process to resolve conflict than women. Cormic (2007) asserted that men mediators who are familiar with the mediation processes plan it to suit particular party and the situation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that female administrators are seen as being more supportive of peaceful method in resolving conflict because they are more communicative, co-operative and persuasive. They are prone to collaboration strategy and more likely to ensure peace and harmony; perhaps because of their nurturing nature of motherhood. On the other hand, male administrators are better in the use of dominance and force.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

1. Federal Universities of South-South of Nigeria should organize a conflict resolution workshop for heads of department to upgrade their knowledge in the area of conflict resolution in their departments.
2. Heads of department who want to maximize organizational conflict resolution strategies should adopt more of collaboration strategy.
3. Both female and male characteristics should be possessed by both administrators for effective conflict resolution in the universities.

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