

**CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN AN ORGANIZATION
(A CASE STUDY OF UNIBANK GHANA LIMITED-ADUM)**

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ABSTRACT

Conflicts arise naturally in every arena of our daily life. Every organization encounters conflict on a daily basis. The aim of the study was to know how conflict is being managed in an organization.

Case study approach with quantitative and qualitative methods was chosen because the study strategy involves a systematic investigation into Unibank as an organization.

The study was also carried out through questionnaires and interviews of management and staff of Unibank-Adum Kumasi. A sample size of 20 employees were selected out of 50 populations in Unibank using simple random sampling technique for the distribution of questionnaires and interviewed three department managers.

It emerged that perceived conflict occurs because of ignorance, poor communication, and lack of proper personnel management. Actual conflict generally occurs when there are multiple paths to accomplish the same goal.

The commendations were that, management should focus on encouraging democratic representation in the choice of leaders and should also strive to treat the employees in the best possible way.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to the almighty God for given us the ideas and vision for writing this project and to all students.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Conflicts arise naturally in every arena of our daily life. Every organization encounters conflict on a daily basis. It is something that cannot be avoided. It happens on the job, between groups, in our society, within families and right in the middle of our most personal relationships. But it is possible to manage them when we recognize them on time. It is necessary to continuously track the organizational signals which point to their existence. If we do not react duly, this can lead to the situation that the conflict will negatively affect the organization.

Conflict occurs between people in all kinds of human relationships and in all social settings. Because of the wide range of potential differences among people, the absence of conflict usually signals the absence of meaningful interaction. Conflict by itself is neither good nor bad. However, the manner in which conflict is handled determines whether it is constructive or destructive (Deutsch and Coleman, 2000). Conflict is defined as an incompatibility of goals or values between two or more parties in a relationship, combined with attempts to control each other and antagonistic feelings toward each other (Fisher, 1990). The incompatibility or difference may exist in reality or may only be perceived by the parties involved. Nonetheless, the opposing actions and the hostile emotions are very real hallmarks of human conflict. Conflict has the potential for either a great deal of destruction or much creativity and positive social change (Kriesberg, 1998). Therefore, it is essential to understand the basic processes of conflict so that; we can work to maximize productive outcomes and minimize destructive ones. This review describes some common sources of

conflict, the nature of conflicts in modern organizations, and the general strategies of approaching conflict that are available.

While no single definition of conflict exists, most definitions seem to involve the following factors, that there are at least two independent groups, the groups that perceive some incompatibility between themselves and the groups that interact with each other in some ways (Putnam and Poole, 1987) for this research project, we choose to define Conflict as a struggle or contest between people with opposite needs, ideas, beliefs, values or goals. Conflict among employees has been increasingly popular in Africa, Europe and North America in recent years. Conflict on team is inevitable; however, the results are not predetermined. Conflict might escalate and lead to non-productive, or conflict can be beneficially resolved and lead to quality final product.

Therefore, learning to manage conflicts is integral to a high performance team, although very few go expecting conflict, more often than not, conflict results because of miscommunication between people with regards to their needs, beliefs or values. Conflict management, then is the employment of strategies to correct the perceived differences in a positive manner. Conflict management involves acquiring skills related to conflict resolution, self-awareness about conflict modes, conflict communication skills and establishing a structure for management of conflict in our environment.

Conflict management also involves implementing strategies to limit the negative aspects of conflict and to increase the positive aspects of conflict at a level, equal to, or higher than where the conflict is taking place. Furthermore, the aim of conflict management is to enhance learning and group outcomes that is the effectiveness or performance in organizational setting

(Rahim, 2002). It is not concerned with eliminating all conflict or avoiding conflict. Conflict can be valuable to groups and organizations. It has been shown to increase group outcomes when managed properly (Rahim & Bonoma, 1979; Kuhu & Poole, 2000). The purpose of this case study is to enlighten the researcher on how conflict is being managed in organizations. The research aims to investigate the extent to which managers manage conflict in their organizations when it arises and also the negative impact it has on organization.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Conflict in the workplace can have different effects depending on how it is managed. In institutions such as banking, clear-cut policies ought to exist to provide guidance on how the administrators ought to manage or resolve conflicts.

First of all, it was noted that frequent and an unwanted argument among employees leads to unhealthy atmosphere within the organization creating a climate of mistrust and suspicion at the workplace.

Secondly, a destructive competition between functions or departments also reduces productivity of work. Again employee's dissatisfaction at work leads to an increase in employees turnovers and also strikes.

The role of management in conflict resolution is therefore, crucial for effective and efficient organization of banking management. However, the researcher will not overlook the fact that, the role of management in conflict resolution is only one of the many functions, which could lead to better organization.

Conflict management is one of the important aspects in solving most of the problems in organizations in the world today. The study concluded that social conflicts in educational institutions demand moral authority and leadership integrity to resolve them. If not resolved, they can have a destabilizing effect on institutional performance in all learning processes.

The focus of this study was to establish and analyse the existing conflict resolution mechanisms in Unibank Ghana Limited, Adum-Kumasi.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are grouped into general and specific objectives.

1.2.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study was to know the purpose of conflict management in Unibank Ghana Limited.

1.2.2 Specific Objectives:

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Determine the type of conflicts that arises in Unibank Ghana Limited.
2. Determine the causes of conflicts within the organization.
3. Inquire the preferred style of resolving conflict.
4. Know how conflicts affect productivity in the organization.
5. Inquire if conflicts management benefit only the employee or the employer.
6. Know the people who are responsible in managing conflict.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions have been formulated to guide the study

1. What types of conflict arise in Unibank Ghana Limited?
2. What are the causes of the conflicts that arise in Unibank Ghana Limited?
3. What are some of the preferred styles of resolving conflict in Unibank Ghana Limited?

4. Does conflict bring about low productivity in the organization?
5. Who benefits from conflict management, is it the employer or the employee?
6. Who are the people responsible for managing conflict?

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

As an academic exercise it will afford us the opportunity to contribute knowledge, improve upon our research experience and provide a basis for further research. The study will be beneficial to human resource managers in recognizing the need to develop a common language that helps people to think effectively and communicate clearly about the conflict and its management.

This research work is not only going to benefit HR managers but any firm that wants to sustain its competitive advantage achieved through investment in the human capital of the firm. This is because there is shift in the world economy from financial base to intellectual capital.

The study is to bring to bear the importance of conflict management in the banking industry. Managing conflict successfully helps both employees and employers adopt a client centered attitude. More so, the study emphasizes on how employee would learn to anticipate guest needs, actively listen to client requests, observe customers behavior and acts accordingly and to communicate with guest effectively.

1.5 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research method will be discussed on how the data is collected; the contents of the research will also be talked about.

The study will employ the cross sectional survey where a subset of the total population will be examined. This is because the cross-sectional survey views the subset of the population as a whole and allows for a true representation of perceptions of the population.

The main target of the study will be on the entire staff of the Banking industry. That is Unibank Ghana Limited (Adum branch).In all data will be collected from the total staff. The research will make use of interrogation method of data collection.

Researcher administered and respondent administered questionnaires would be used to collect the data. The questionnaires will be hand delivered. The responses of the respondents will be categorized under the objectives of the study. The raw data to be collected will be assembled and organized using the frequency table.

Statistical package for social scientist (SPSS) would be used to establish the difference and the similarities in responses. Interpretations, descriptions and discussions of the main issues will be based entirely on the frequency distribution and the percentages calculated.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study covers Unibank Ghana Limited in the Ashanti Region (Adum Branch) on how conflict is being managed in the banking institution.

1.7 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study should have been undertaken in several or almost all the banking sectors in Ashanti Region, but due to revenue and time constraints, Unibank Ghana Limited in Kumasi (Adum branch) was used as a case study

1.8 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

The study is grouped under five chapters each of which presents specific details on the topic of the research.

Chapter one is the introductory chapter of the study and contains the following sub-topic, background, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, methodology, scope of the study, limitation and organization of the study.

Chapter two is centered on Literature necessary for the study; thus consultation of existing conflict and its management in the Banking industry.

Chapter three captures methodology of the study which includes research design, population and sample, method of data collection and procedure and data analysis whiles,

Chapter four also teaches on data analysis from the questionnaire.

Chapter five however is a summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, literature is reviewed according to the research questions used in the study.

Information was extracted from various books, journals, internet for the study.

Ivancevich and Matteson categorize conflict into two effects; first, there are functional conflicts. Defined as confrontation between groups that enhances and benefits the organization's performance, this unique type of conflict is a positive effect.

Once occurring, this type of conflict yields such fruits as increased awareness of problems that should be addressed, wider and more beneficial solutions to problems and even innovations.

Second, dysfunctional conflict is a situation in which the department reaps a problem or hindrance. The harms members and may extend to delaying organizational progress. Once the organization suffers, further conflict may extend to other department members and this stimulates further conflicts.

In an article by Filley (1975), conflict has distinct organizational advantages. There may an increase in group cohesiveness. Group members may become higher, and corporation among work groups may become enhanced. Conflict may also serve as a barrier of more serious conflict.

A conflict of today may strengthen a group and potentially deter future episodes. Further, once conflict ensues, new solutions may be developed once the issues are brought to light.

Lastly, conflict may yield innovative products and programs.

2.1 DEFINITION OF CONFLICT

It is worth repeating here that the conflict-free company has never existed and never will exist. Antagonisms, tensions, aggressions, stereotypes, negative attitudes and the frustrations of perceived conflicting needs will always be present wherever men are forced to live and work together. (**Karen L. Fleetwood Pace,**)

Conflict is a perpetual given of life, although varying views of it may be held. Some may view conflict as being a negative situation which must be avoided at any cost. Others may see conflict as being a phenomenon which necessitates management. Still others may consider conflict as being an exciting opportunity for personal growth and so try to use it to their best advantage. Wherever one may fall on this continuum of viewpoints concerning conflict, seldom would one expect to be in a continual state of conflict as the basis for employment.

Conflict theory is significant to the role of the administrator, but it emanates primarily from fields such as business, sociology, and psychology, and not from communication or even education. Conflict is difficult to define; or rather it is difficult to come to a consensus concerning the definition of this term.

Coser (1967) says that conflict is "a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power, and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure, or eliminate the rivals." Deutsch (1973) states that conflict exists whenever incompatible activities occur. An action which is incompatible with another action prevents, obstructs, interferes with, injures, or in some way makes it less likely or less effective.

Schmidt and Kochan (1972) define conflict by saying that a perceived opportunity exists for interfering with the other's goal attainment. Hocker and Wilmot (1985) define conflict (from a communication perspective) as "an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards, and interference from the other party in achieving their goals. "Obviously, there are many definitions of conflict. The sheer variety of definitions may make an analysis of conflict management episodes confusing.

Conflict is the struggle or contest between people with opposite needs, ideas, beliefs, values or goals (Morton Deutsch, Peter T. Coleman, 2006 stage publication, USA). There are at least two independent groups that perceive some incompatibility between themselves and the groups that interact with each other in some ways. (Putnam and Poole, 1987).

Conflict management also involves implementing strategies to limit the negative aspects of conflict and to increase the positive aspects of conflicts at a level equal to or higher than where the conflict is taking place.

Furthermore, the aim of conflict management is to enhance learning and group outcomes that is the effectiveness or performance in organizational setting (Rahim, 2002). It is not concerned with eliminating all conflicts or avoiding conflicts. Conflicts can be valuable to groups and organizations. It has been shown to increase group outcomes when managed properly (Rahim and Bonoma, 1978, Kuhu and Poole, 2000).

To manage conflicts effectively, an organization needs to develop a common language that helps people think effectively and communicate clearly about conflicts and its management.

Conflict is processes that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected or is about to negatively affect something that the first party cares about according to (Stephen P. Robbins).

Supervisorsspend more than 25% of their time on conflict management and managers spend more than 18% of their time on relational employee conflicts. These figures have doubled since the mid-1980s.

Companies have distinguished some key factors as the growing complexity of organization's use of teams, group decision making and globalization. (Lang, 2009).

Conflict is endemic to all social life. As discussed earlier, and conflict is an inevitable part of living because it is related to situations of scarce resources, divisions of functions, power relations and role differentiation. One will also realize that conflicts generate considerable ambivalence and leave many scholars and leaves many scholars and administrators quite uncertain about its meaning and relevance and how best to cope with it.

On the other hand, conflict is an indispensable part of the Human resource Management activities. More and more companies have realized how important it is to manage conflict in the changing and complex work environment. Conflict management is designed to achieve consensus among individuals and groups and it can increase ones understanding of different points of view. One can learn to identify the positive and negative effects of conflicts which can help one optimize its actions and understand difficult situations when it arises.

2.2 CAUSES OF CONFLICT IN AN ORGANIZATION

Conflict in an organization can arise due to many factors which include:

2.2.1 Poor Communication

Employees experience continual surprises, for example, they are not informed of major decisions that affect their work place. Employees do not understand the reason for the decision; they are not involved in the decision making. As a result, they trust the “rumor mill” more than their management (Carter McNamara, MBA, PHD).

2.2.2) Leadership Problems

Leadership problems are a common source of conflict. They can include avoiding conflict instead of addressing problems with subordinates. This allows conflict to fester.

In other instances, supervisors may “play favorites” with some employees.

This can make it difficult to rally the help of subordinates in times of need. Inconsistency in decision making can also cause problems, such as confusion about expectations when supervisors also do not understand the jobs of their subordinates.

2.2.3 Dead Lines

In projects, deadlines are very important. Dead Lines can easily cause conflicts when the employee thinks that a dead line given to him or her or as a group to meet a particular target is limited by management but management thinks it is enough and that can result in conflict or when groups start to push deadline limits as the conflicts become more important than reaching their deadlines. When both sides think they are right and the conflict is not brought to check, the idea that each side must think they are right before they can move on will begin to affect important deadlines.

2.2.4 Lack of teamwork/poor performance

This can be another cause of conflict if some in the team believe other colleagues are not pulling their weight or not competent in the job they do. Overall, conflict often arises when there is a non acceptance of the differences which there is a high level of uncertainty or where there are poor industrial relations. The atmosphere that this causes can often be resulting in a rising of tension levels and consequential poor relationship at work.

2.2.5 Poor Organizational Structures

Where people may feel alienated or isolated, thus the spirit of competitiveness and non co-operation may be strong, this will also clash with the organizational policies and strategies due to different styles of interaction or differing values or beliefs as well as culture is not considered.

2.2.6 Lack of Role Definition

Conflict can occur when employees do not understand their role or job functions. Uncertainty about “who does what” can lead co-workers to feel they are working disproportionately harder than others. It can also lead to where an employee perceives a co-worker in infringing upon their duties, clearly defining roles and responsibilities.

2.2.7 Non Compliance with work place policies

Policies and procedures in work place bring order and improve efficiency. In a policy environment, employees usually do not perform to management expectations. It can also lead to safety issues. Conflicts can occur between co-worker and management when an employee diverts from required policies, procedures or work rules. It is important for supervisors to monitor policy compliance and take corrective actions in the early stages of on compliance.

2.3 TYPES OF CONFLICTS

Basically, conflicts can be divided or grouped into five types.

2.3.1 Inter-personal Conflict

This is a conflict between two or more individuals who do not share the goals or values or who are in opposite to one another. In an organization, one manager might argue that the organization must hire more MBAs in order to increase performance whiles other managers may insist that MBAs are too expensive not required given the objectives of the organization. (Work place conflict, Boston university FSAO, 2010/2011).

2.3.2 Intra-personal Conflict

Conflict within the person, this arises when the individual due to actual or perceived pressures from incompatible goal except actions. Intrapersonal conflicts have the following sub-dimensions.

2.3.2.1 Approach-Approach

The dilemma of choosing between two positive and equally interactive alternatives; that is choosing between a valued promotion and a new job outside.

(Work place conflict, Boston University FSAO, 2010/2011).

2.3.2.2 Avoidance-Avoidance

Choosing between a negative and equally unattractive alternative; that is being eager to accept job transfer to another town or have one's employment with an organization terminated. (Work place conflict, Boston university FSAO, 2010/2011).

2.3.2.3 Approach-Avoidance

Deciding to do something that has both positive and negative consequences; that is being offered higher paid job but your responsibilities will curtail all your time

2.3.2.4 Avoidance-Approach

Deciding to do something that has both negative and positive consequences; that is being posted to an undesirable place with a promotion.

2.3.3 Inter-Group

Usually occurs among groups in an organization. This type of conflict is most often seen between functional groups, teams or departments. These groups may have diverse interests, and may not be willing to share information freely. Members of groups might clash with members of other groups as well. (Work place conflict, Boston university FSAO, 2010/2011).

2.3.4 Intra-Groups

This type of conflicts arises within and among groups, teams or departments. Members of the marketing department might experience conflict over the allocation of resource made available to that department. (Work place conflict, Boston university FSAO, 2010/2011).

2.3.5 Inter-Organizational

This type of conflicts emerges among organizations, for example, an organization that has a mission to defend and protect wild life may come into conflict with builders who argue the need to clear large areas of wilderness in order to develop properties. As one might expect, inter-organizational conflict is also often seen between businesses that operate in the same markets. Inter-organizational conflicts occur in the competition and rivalry that characterized

firms operating in the same market. It also occurs between unions and organizations employing their members, between government's regulatory agencies and organizations subjected to their surveillance and between organizations and suppliers of raw materials. (Work place conflict, Boston university FSAO,2010/2011).

2.4 MANAGING ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT

Conflict management can obviously be linked to many disciplines. In an institution a fair amount of literature has been written linking conflict management to the sector. Bailey (1971) believes that field experience is best when it comes to developing conflict management skills.

The level of service quality depends on the successfully resolved conflict. In the banking industry, conflict is not something which is to be avoided at all cost. In fact conflict can sometimes be the quickest and best way to make creative progress. You certainly do not want everyone automatically to say "yes" to everything without proper discussion.

Therefore, managing conflict is essential in many ways. It is a means of productivity while employees are armed with valid thoughts. Conflict management also motivates and inspires workers by providing employees with all needed information in work as well as helps them to recognize ideas on how important each person's ideas are on the job. Conflict management can be seen as a key instrument in the implementation of human resource management practices and policies. Successful banking industries or organizations always include conflict management in their important development strategy.

Furthermore, the aim of conflict management is to enhance learning and group outcomes that is the effectiveness or performance in organizational setting (Rahim,2002 p.208).

An individual tends to react to conflict in various ways; Kenneth Thomas argues that there is no one best way to facilitate conflict management and various styles will be more or less effective, depending on the situation.

Supervisors spend more than 25% of their time on conflict management and managers spend more than 18% of their time on relational employee conflicts. These figures are doubled since the mid-1980s.

One of the ways to solve conflict is through the collaborating theory, which maintains that people should air their differences and work for mutually satisfactory solutions. Collaboration requires that a member of the organization be interdependent, capable of interacting, and sufficiently committed to the organization to justify the time and energy required to develop and preserve mutually beneficial relationships.

Bargaining is another way management could consider in managing conflict in the organization, this method is seen as economical in that it requires parties to meet only periodically to review the old contracts and to develop new contracts. The author concludes that there is no one best way to manage organizational conflicts and suggests that conflict management will require more extension studies of the realities of power play.

Collective bargaining in workplace situations, it is necessary to have agreed mechanism in place for groups of people who may be antagonistic to collectively discuss and resolve issues This process is often called “collective bargaining”, because representatives of each groups

come together with a mandate to work out a solution collectively. Experience has shown that this is far better than avoidance or withdrawal, and puts democratic processes in place to achieve “integrative problem solving”, where people or groups who must find ways of co-operating in the same organization, do so within their own agreed rules and procedure.

Equal Voices give all parties to a conflict an equal voice, regardless of their position, length of service or political influence. Conflict participants can become defensive if they feel they are being marginalized or are going through a process leading to a predetermined outcome. It can be tempting to take the word of managers over front-line employees, or to take the word of a loyal employee over a new employee, but remember that your most trusted associates are necessarily infallible. Go beyond simply giving everyone an equal chance to speak; give their arguments an equal weight in your mind when mediating a conflict. Conciliation the dictionary defines conciliation is the act of procuring good will or inducing a friendly feeling” groups who are in conflict and who have failed to reach agreement can come together once again to attempt to settle their difference. Workers usually attempt this before the more serious step of strike or a lockout by management is taken; and it is useful to use a facilitator in the conciliation process.

Hierarchical Referral this is simply the act of referring the conflict to someone higher in the hierarchy. Sometimes this does indeed resolve the conflict permanently, but it can also fuel future. Example, if a conflict is referred to VP level and the VP finds in favor of one party, that party may be more aggressive in the next conflict, making the assumption. That the VP will rule in their favour again. What’s worse is that sometimes the conflict management gets moved so high up the hierarchy that the person at the top does not know enough about the antecedents or causes of the conflict to make an informed decision.

Altering Scripts and Myths this recall from our discussion on organizational culture that scripts and myths represent observable artifacts of culture. Sometimes, for example, managers try to manage conflict through standards meetings. This scenario might seem familiar if you participate with a number of other managers in a monthly meeting to discuss various challenges and issues across your department. Yet, in reality this approach rarely, if ever, seems to reduce serious conflict. As a result, this type of ritual ceases to be taken seriously by participants.

2.5 FACTORS THAT CAN AFFECT CONFLICT MODES

Some factors that can impact how we respond to conflict are listed below with explanations of how these factors might affect us. Self-concept: the way we see ourselves, how we think and feel about ourselves affect how we approach conflict. Do we think our thoughts, feelings, and opinions are worth being heard by the person with whom we are in conflict? Expectations: self-fulfillment. Do we believe the other person or our team wants to resolve the conflict?

Situation: where is the conflict occurring, do we know the person we are in conflict with, and is the conflict personal or professional?

Communication skill: the essence of conflict resolution and conflict management is the ability to communicate effectively. People who have and use effective communication will resolve their conflicts with greater ease and success. Life experiences: we often practice the conflict modes we saw our primary caretakers use unless we have made a conscious choice as adults to change or adapt our conflict styles. Some of us had great role models teach us to manage our conflicts and others of us had less-than-great role models. Our life experiences,

both personal and professional, have taught us to frame conflicts as either something positive that can be worked through or something negative to be avoided and ignored at all cost.

Gender: some of us were socialized to use particular conflict modes because of our gender. For example, some males, because they are male, were taught “always stand up to someone, and, if you have to fight, then fight”. If one was socialized this way he will be more likely to assertive conflict modes versus using cooperative modes.

2.6 STRATEGIES FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Larson and Gray’s list of five strategies for managing dysfunctional conflict provides a good summary of approaches.

2.6.1. Mediation

The goal is to identify multiple possible alternatives and to mutually select one that is acceptable to all involved parties and in the interest of project objectives.

2.6.2. Arbitration

This strategy requires the project manager to provide a safe and productive opportunity for the conflicted parties to air their disagreements. After careful attention and fully listening to each party, the project manager should formulate, define, and provide a solution to the parties. This strategy is based on the forcing approach to conflict described earlier. Arbitration can often be effectively combined with mediation by forcing an initial conflict solution and then allowing the parties to negotiate to a more mutually acceptable alternative.

2.6.3 Control

Based on the smoothing approach described earlier, this strategy seeks to bring tension and emotions down to a level at which productive discussion and negotiation can occur. Humor is often an effective tool, as well as the use of temporary breaks or time outs in the discussions between conflicted time-outs parties.

2.6.4 Acceptance

The decision can be made that the conflict consequences are negligible relative to project objectives and, therefore, require no action. This strategy carries significant risk of later escalation and should be combined with specific plans for monitoring the situation to ensure that the conflict remains at an acceptable level.

2.6.5 Elimination

Finally, the elimination strategy is reserved for those conflicts that have become so dysfunctional that the project can no longer tolerate any impacts from them. Often a last resort, elimination involves the removal of the conflicted parties from involvement with the project.

2.7 THE IMPORTANCE OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

No organization runs for charity, it has to make money to survive well. Employees must give their maximum support at work to ensure the maximum productivity. Nothing productive will ever come out if the employees are constantly engaged in fighting and criticizing others. Conflict management plays a very important role at workplaces to prevent conflicts and for the employees to concentrate on their work. The team leaders must ensure that the roles and responsibilities of each and every employee are clearly passed on to them. Employees should

be demotivated to interfere in each other's work. Employees waste half of their time and energy in fighting with others and find it very difficult to work which they are actually supposed to do. An individual must enjoy his work; otherwise he would never be able to give his best. The following are some importance of conflict management;

2.7.1 Conflict management goes a long way in strengthening the bond among the employees and half of the problems automatically disappear. Individuals must feel motivated at work and find every single day exciting and challenging. Before implementing any idea, it must be discussed with everyone and no one should ever feel ignored or left out. This way, every employee feels indispensable for the office and he strives hard to live up to the expectations of his fellow workers and in a way contributing to the organization in his best possible way. Conflict management avoids conflicts to a great extent and thus also reduces the stress and tensions of the employees. No one likes to carry his tensions back home and if you fight with your colleagues and other people, you are bound to feel uncomfortable and restless even at home.

2.7.2 Conflict management also plays an important role in our personal lives. Tussles and fights spoil relationships and only increase our list of enemies. Everyone needs friends who will stand by us when we need them. Conflict must be avoided at homes as it spoils the ambience and spreads negativity. Individuals tend to disrespect others as a result of conflicts. Conflict management prevents fall out between family members, friends, and relatives and makes life peaceful and stress-free. Blame game never helps anyone, instead it makes life miserable. No idea can ever be implemented if the individuals fight among themselves.

2.7.3. Conflict management helps to find a middle way, an alternative to any problem and successful implementation of the idea. Problems must be addressed at the right time to prevent conflict and its adverse effects at a later stage. Through conflict management skills,

an individual explores all the possible reasons to worry which might later lead to a big problem and tries to resolve it as soon as possible. Stress disappears, people feel motivated, happy and the world definitely becomes a much better place to stay as a result of conflict management

2.8 INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT.

Special consideration should be paid to conflict management between two parties from distinct cultures. In addition to the everyday sources of conflict, "misunderstandings, and from this counterproductive, pseudo conflicts, arise when members of one culture are unable to understand culturally determined differences in communication practices, traditions, and thought processing" (Borisoff& Victor, 1989).Indeed, this has already been observed in the business research literature. Renner (2007) recounted several episodes where managers from developed countries moved to less developed countries to resolve conflicts within the company and met with little success due to their failure to adapt to the conflict management styles of the local culture.As an example, in Kozan's study noted above, he noted that Asian cultures are far more likely to use a harmony model of conflict management. If a party operating from a harmony model comes in conflict with a party using a more confrontational model, misunderstandings above and beyond those generated by the conflict itself will arise.International conflict management, and the cultural issues associated with it, is one of the primary areas of research in the field at the time, as existing research is insufficient to deal with the ever increasing contact occurring between international entities.

2.9 HOW CONFLICT IS MANAGED IN AN ORGANIZATION

Overall, conflict management should aim to minimize effective conflicts at all levels, attain and maintain a moderate amount of substantive conflict, and use the appropriate conflict

management strategy to effectively bring about the first two goals, and also to match the status and concerns of the two parties in conflict (Rahim, 2002). In order for conflict management strategies to be effective, they should satisfy certain criteria.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the methodology used in gathering the data; it includes the population of the study, sample size and sampling procedure used. It also discusses the research design, which comprises sample procedures and the justification for choosing the study area, sources and types of data and ends with the limitation of the data.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The case study research design was adopted. It was aimed at conflict management and its effect on Unibank Ghana limited (Adum branch).

This study is undertaken to ascertain how Conflict is being managed.

Unibank Ghana Limited, which is a privately owned company, was deliberately chosen to ascertain what pertains in the Human Resource in an attempt to manage conflict within the banking institution.

3.2 SOURCES OF DATA

According to Sauders et al (2007:322), there are two main approaches to data collection namely, Primary data and Secondary data.

3.2.1 Primary Data

This is data originated by the researcher especially to address the research problem (Malhatra and birks 2007:94). Barnes 2000 as cited in Amissah et al 2008 argued that primary data are first-hand information gotten from the research. This could be in the form of interview, response from questionnaires. There six available forms of collecting qualitative empirical

data. These are documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, practical observation, physical artifacts, Yin (1994) as cited in Khiabani (2006). For the purpose of this research the researcher employed questionnaires and interviews.

3.2.2 Secondary Data

This has to do with data that have already been collected for purpose other than the problem at hand. They are existing information made up of publications such as books, journals; articles, internet sources and many others already established facts. In this study the researcher relied on some of these sources.

3.2.3 Questionnaires and Interviews

According to Welman and Kruger (2001:160) in a structured interview, the interviewer asks a respondent a collection of questions from previously compiled questionnaires (known as an interview schedule), face to face and records their responses. The interviewer is restricted to the questions, their wording and their order and their order as they appear on the schedule with relatively little freedom to deviate from it.

3.3 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

Due to limited time and the need for follow ups, the entire population of fifty (50) employees, cannot be covered hence the need to adopt sampling method which can be used to select some of the staff to represent the whole population of the study. A sample of 20 individuals was drawn from the population of the employees.

Simple random sampling was used to ensure that they all have equal chances of being selected. This technique was used to ensure that there is a fair view of issues raised.

3.4 SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

A simple random method was used to grant each member of the population an equal chance of being selected. The selection was made in the human resource department, accounting department and marketing department.

At the Human Resource Department, ten (10) employees were chosen, five (5) from the Accounting Department, and five (5) from the Marketing Department. This method was chosen because the researchers see it as a manageable size that they can handle very well and also as a way of representing a fair means of the issues raised.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

Questionnaire was the main instrument used in gathering data. Open and closed ended questions were used. Data were gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Secondary sources of data were from books, the internet, journals, magazines and newspapers.

The primary data however were gathered through the administration of questionnaires and interviews. Open ended questions were used to allow the respondent to answer the questions in their own words whilst the close ended questions gave them a number of predetermined alternatives to choose from.

Questionnaires were used for a larger population size since its administration was not difficult and was less expensive. A period of three weeks was used to gather the primary data from the above mentioned sources due to the respondent's busy schedules.

The questionnaires were employed to solicit views from respondents, and by using this, the researcher will arrive at valid and accurate conclusion that will give meaning to the objectives of the study. Questionnaire was used because the respondents can read and write. This was to ensure that respondent answered the question without any interference and thereby eliminate issues of biases.

3.6 RESEARCH METHOD

In general there are two types of research methods; qualitative research method and quantitative research method. The essence of this study calls for the application of both methods. For the quantitative research model, questionnaires were sent to the managers and a few employees.

In case of qualitative research, it was done through personal interviews. Key players to this interview were the Departmental managers, Assistant Human Resource Manager and some supervisors of the bank.

3.6.1 Quantitative Research

This research concept gives the researcher an understanding of the problem by being provided with some existing information. As stated earlier this information was gathered from the various employees and managers. Quantitative research seeks to quantify the collected data for analysis. This would help to determine the final course of action or what to do after. (Golfshani 2003, 597). To highlight on the above, quantitative method is used to gather information from the managers about how they manage conflict when it arises. The quantitative method makes it much possible to have a systematic, clear and scientific understanding of the opinions. Interviewing one or more of the employees about their

thoughts is always the best. it does not represent all employees' opinion. The quantitative research will be analysed using graphs and tables.

3.6.2 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research forms a major role in supporting decision-making primarily as an exploratory design but also as a descriptive design (Malhotra and Birks, 131). It is worth noting that this research unlike quantitative is not based on statistics. The diagram below depicts the qualitative techniques adopted by researchers.

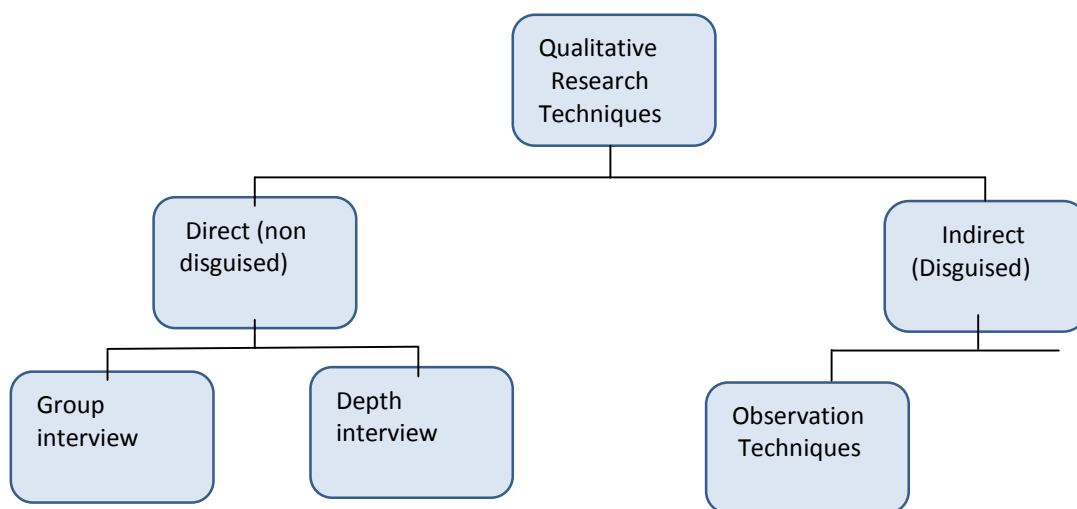


Figure 3.1 Qualitative Research Techniques (Malhotra&Birks 2003, 158)

According to Malhotra& Birks 2003, 158, qualitative research uses the above techniques. However for the purpose of the study, we adopted the in-depth interview method. Research technique conducted in the field (rather than in the researcher's office). In the unstructured home environment, the interviewer interacts with respondents and encourages them (usually in a one-on-one situation) to freely express their opinions, ideas, feelings, thoughts, and attitudes.

3.7 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The data were analysed using statistical techniques. Tables were used to present the data.

3.8 ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

UniBank (Ghana) Limited was incorporated as a private company in December 1997 to operate as a bank. It is a wholly owned Ghanaian and authorized to undertake a broad range of banking business. The Bank opened its door to customers in January 2001.

VISION OF UNIBANK

To be the leading and preferred Bank offering comprehensive financial solutions to our chosen customers (SME and Personal Banking markets) in a professional, caring, responsive and profitable way.

MISSION OF UNIBANK

- - Provide the best value for our customers;
- - Create an excellent working environment for our employee development and growth;
- - Enhance shareholder value; and
- - Be socially responsive to our communities

SHARED VALUES OF UNIBANK

Flexible - Minimal bureaucracy - Adaptive to changing needs	Caring - Customer delight - Personalized service
Vibrant - Energetic - Ingenious	Team - Will to win - One-ness of purpose - Strength

Our core values are worthy of our organization and we believe we should incorporate them as anchor points in everything we do in the Bank. These values provide us with a means of not only guiding but also evaluating our operations, our planning and our vision for the future.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is concerned with the analysis of the data obtained from the field. The analysis is limited to the objectives of the study of the respondents. The broad objective of the study was to determine various types, causes and mechanisms applied in resolving conflicts within Unibank Ghana limited. This chapter presents an interpretation and discussion of results derived from the field.

The findings were drawn from human resource department, accounting department and marketing department from a sample of 20 individuals within the organization. The chapter addresses all the study objectives.

4.1 DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

After the fieldwork before analysis, all the questionnaires were adequately checked for completeness. The information was coded and entered into a spread sheet and analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The data was checked to ensure that the output was free from outliers and the effect of missing responses was at the minimum. Quantitative analysis involved generating descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistics included frequency tallies, and their corresponding percentage scores. The findings were presented by using tables and charts as found appropriate. Qualitative analysis involved categorizing of data from interviews and field notes into common themes and presented using frequency distribution tables and charts.

4.2 Findings of the research objectives

Statistics

		conflict type prevails	resolution style	affect employee psychological ly	benefit from conflict management	responsible for managing conflict	lower productivity
N	Valid	10	11	20	19	20	20
	Missing	10	9	0	1	0	0

Table 4.2 Frequency of the research objectives

This information gathered shows that 10 people answered while 10 did not answer to the conflict type, 11 people answered while 9 people did not answer to the resolution style, 19 people answered while one person did not answer to the benefit, all the 20 respondent answered to the psychologically effect, productivity and responsibility for managing conflict.

4.3 CONFLICT TYPE ENCOUNTERED BY UNIBANK

Secondly, there was the need to know the type of conflict that normally occurs in the organization in order to be able to find the appropriate mechanism to deal with it when it arises. The table and diagram below gives a pictorial clarification of the type of conflict within the organization.

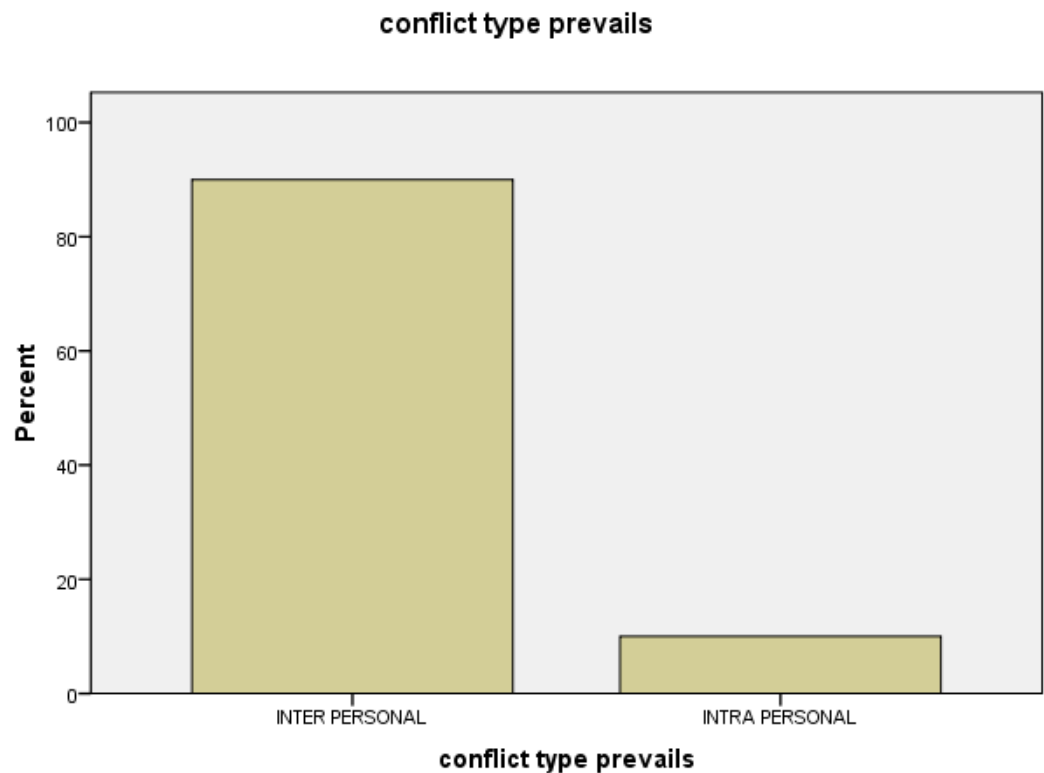
Table 4.3 conflict type encounter by Unibank
conflict type prevails

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid cent	Per Cumulative Per cent
Valid	INTER PERSONAL	9	45.0	90.0	90.0
	INTRA PERSONAL	1	5.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	10	50.0	100.0	
Missing	System	10	50.0		
Total		20	100.0		

Source: Field work May, 2013

From table 4.3 it shows that 50% of the sample (10 people) did not answer the type of conflict that prevails within the organisation, 45% (9 people) chose inter-personal whilst 5%(1person) answered intra-personal.

Figure 4.3 conflict type encountered by Unibank



The figure shown above illustrates the bar chart of the types of conflict that prevails within the bank. Majority answered to the interpersonal 90% while 10% answered to the intrapersonal.

4.3.1 Analysis and Discussion of Data

In analysing the data, the study revealed that inter-personal conflict prevailed within the bank which is conflict between two or more individuals who do not share the same goals or values or who are in opposition to one another. And the second most answered is inter-personal which is conflict within the person, this arises when the individual due to actual or perceived pressures from incompatible goal expect action.

4.4 RESOLUTION STYLE OF UNIBANK

Conflict management styles are a result of one's concern for accomplishing one's goals and one's concern about the other person's accomplishing his or her goals. Resolution style will help to find out the most recommended style in place to handle conflict. The purpose of this question is to investigate the preferred style of conflict resolution the management stand on when resolving conflict. The table and figure below gives a clear reflection of resolution style.

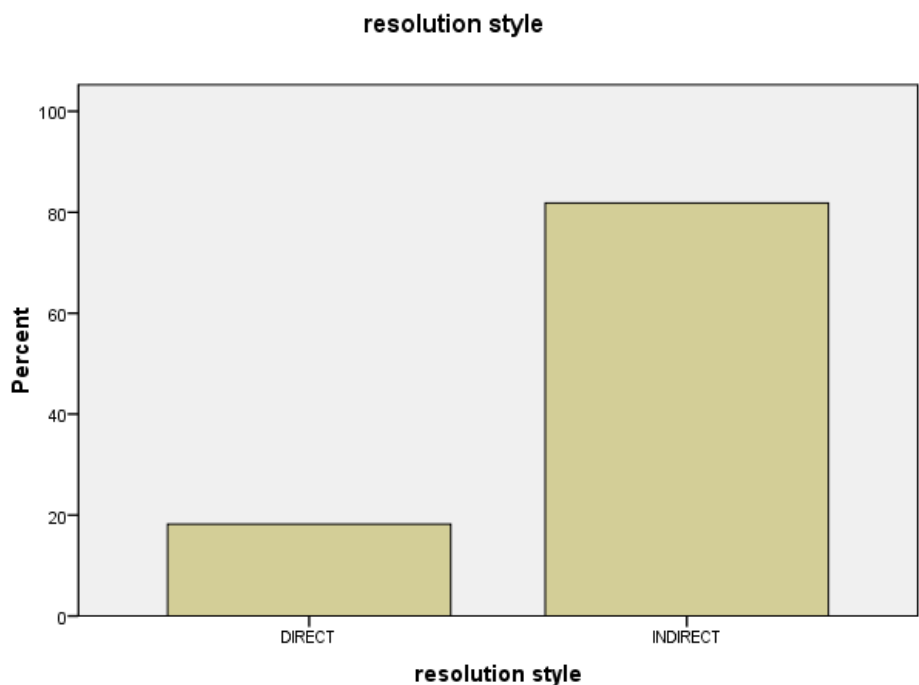
**Table 4.4 Resolution style of Unibank
resolution style**

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	DIRECT	2	10.0	18.2	18.2
	INDIRECT	9	45.0	81.8	100.0
	Total	11	55.0	100.0	
Missing	System	9	45.0		
Total		20	100.0		

Source: field work May, 2013

From the frequency Table 4.4, 45% (9 people) did not answer the type of resolution style used in managing conflicts, 10% (2 people) answered direct style of managing conflicts and 45%(9people) chose indirect type of managing conflict.

Fig 4.4 Resolution style of Unibank



4.4.1 Analysis and discussion of data

The figure above shows the bar graph indicating the resolution style in managing the type of conflict that arises within the organisation. Majority of the respondent decided on indirect approach which is when individuals engage in withdrawal and avoidance while silently retaining their claims to resources or validation. Minority of the respondent chose direct approach that is conflicting individuals and groups reach resolution by confronting each other directly.

4.5 THE IMPACT OF CONFLICT AMONG EMPLOYEES.

Question number seven and ten on the questionnaire aim to find out the impact of conflict among the employees performance if the conflict is not dealt with or not managed properly.

Table 4.5 The impact of conflict among employees.

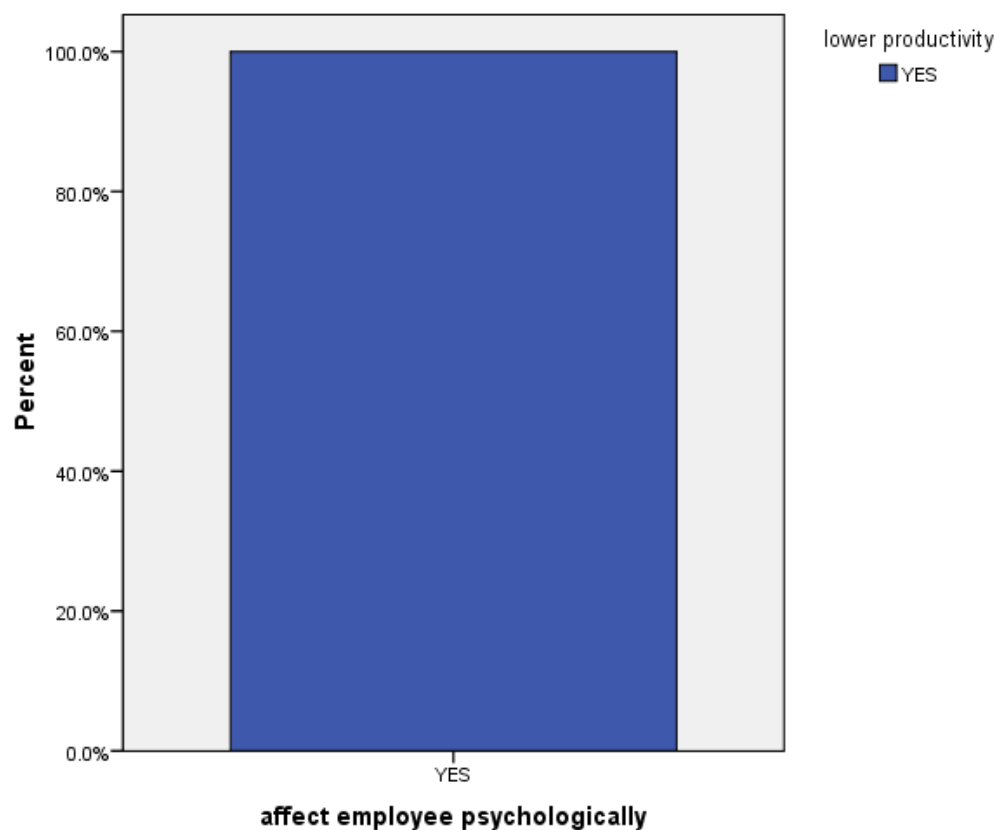
Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Per cent	N	Per cent	N	Per cent
affect employee psychologically * lower productivity	20	100.0%	0	.0%	20	100.0%

Source: Field work May, 2013

From the above table 4.5 and figure 4.5 shows the impact of conflict among employees. All the 20 respondent representing 100% said conflict affects them psychologically, and all the 20 respondent representing 100% said conflict lowers productivity as well.

Figure 4.5 The impact of conflict among employees.



4.5.1 Analysis and Discussion of Data

In analysing the data, the study revealed that all the 20 respondent said conflict affects them psychologically, and all the 20 respondent said conflict lowers productivity as well. This shows the negative effect it has on the employee and the organization as a whole since psychologically employees are being affected by conflict and goes a long way to decrease productivity at the work place.

4.6 CONFLICT MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY.

This question aims to look for the person who is responsible for managing conflict in Unibank Ghana limited, either the management of the organization, or by management sourced outside agencies. According to the research conducted at Unibank Ghana limited, Management of the organization are mostly responsible for managing conflict.

Table 4.6 responsible for managing conflict

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid cent	Per Cumulative per cent
valid management	20	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Field work May 2013

The information gathered from the table above buttressed the point that Management are solely responsible for managing conflict at Unibank Ghana limited.

Figure 4.6 who is responsible for conflict management



4.6.1 Analysis and discussion of data

In analysing the data, the information gathered from the table and figure above buttressed the point that Management are solely responsible for managing conflict at Unibank Ghana limited.

4.7 WHO BENEFIT FROM CONFLICT MANAGEMENT?

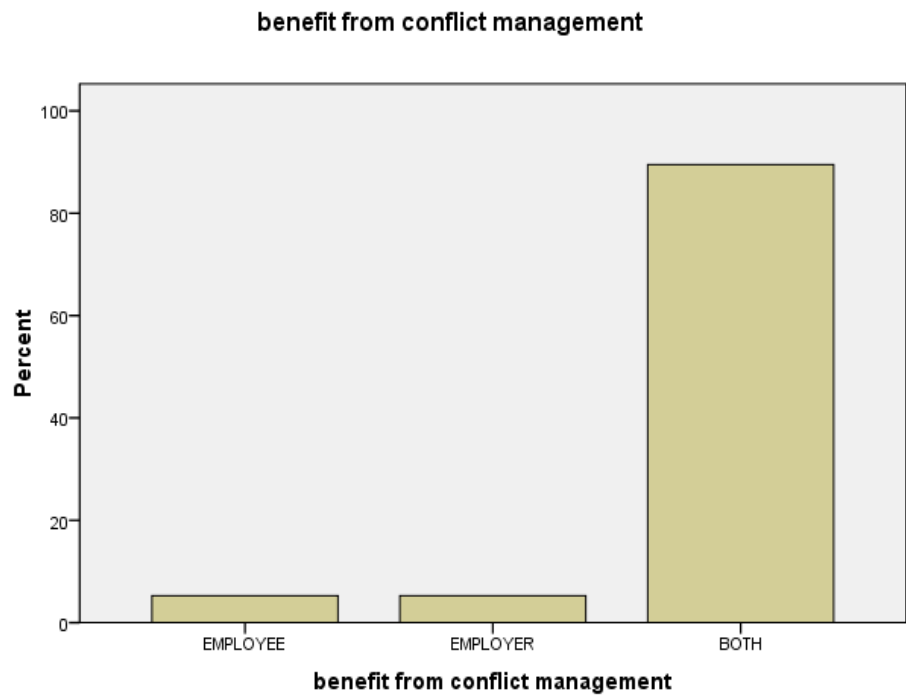
Research also shows that both employees and employers benefit from conflict management. 1 respondent supported that it is only the employee who benefits, 1 also said it the employer and the remaining 17 said both the employees and the employers benefit from conflict management. 1 respondent did not answer the question as illustrated in the table below

Table 4.7 who benefits from conflict management
benefit from conflict management

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	employee	1	5.0	5.3	5.3
	employer	1	5.0	5.3	10.5
	both	17	85.0	89.5	100.0
	total	19	95.0	100.0	
Missing	system	1	5.0		
Total		20	100.0		

Source: field work May 2013

Figure 4.7 who benefit from conflict management?



The figure above shows that most of the respondent 95% said both employees and employers benefit from managing conflict, 3% of the respondent said employees and 2% said employers.

4.7.1 Analysis and Discussion of Data

In analysing the data, the Research shows that both employees and employers benefit from conflict management.

4.8 INTERVIEW RESULT

The researchers had the opportunity to interview the manager who doubles as Human Resource manager. He is in charge of planning, organizing, monitoring and managing conflicts in the organization. He has experience in the banking industry. According to him, management of conflicts in the bank has really improved the performance of the employees

in discharging their duties. The manager also touched on the major causes of conflict at the bank. The causes include, poor communication, lack of proper personnel management, multiple paths to accomplish the same goals and relationship conflict. The resultant conflict at the employee level, if it progresses leads to negative implications and continued conflict with the organization as a whole. The manager pointed out again that conflict may be caused by conflicting demands such as contradictory orders from multiple supervisors.

Once a conflict begins in such situations and continues without being resolved, future conflict will occur if there is no proper intervention. The conflict as mentioned may continue into an indefinite period of time.

Finally, he identified another possible cause as relationship conflict. Employees who often work together develop relationship due to the amount of time spent together in the work place.

Although once a while conflict arises, he said the conflict is important because when properly solved it increases work effectiveness. The management has plans of investing in future conflict resolutions among employees and management looking at the benefits that the organization reaps from conflict management.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

The final chapter concludes the study by making a summary of the analysis and findings of the data collected as well as answers provided to the research questions. The findings provide the basis for the researcher to make certain recommendations that would help the workers and management of Unibank Ghana limited to further strengthen the competitive position of the company.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

Types of conflict

The research showed that Inter-Personal conflict exists mostly among employees of the organization. Apart from that there are other causes of conflict in the organization which is intra -personal.

Approaches to conflict management

The researcher also found out that indirect approach to conflict resolution is used to solve conflict issues then direct approach.

Effect of conflicts on employees

During the findings it was noted that conflict have psychological effects on employees which result in lower productivity.

Responsibility of conflict management

Management was the key people responsible for resolving conflict in the organization.

Importance of conflict management

Most employees also admitted that conflict management was important.

Benefit of conflict management

It was found out that conflict management benefits both the employers and the employees of the organization.

5.2 CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to look at the conflict management in the light of Unibank Ghana Limited. The study has shown that, the concept of “conflict management” refers to an act and also a process of resolving disputes between two or more parties with the view of coming to a resolution. At the Corporate level, it emerged that perceived conflict occurs because of ignorance, poor communication, and lack of proper personnel management. Actual conflict generally occurs when there are multiple paths to accomplish the same goal. The study showed that, when the employees are faced with a conflict of personal nature, majority of them deal with the conflict through indirect approaches such as engaging in withdrawal and avoidance while silently retaining their claims to resources or validation, attempting to investigate the issue in conflict so as to find a solution acceptable to all, trying to bring all the concerns out in the open so that, the issues can be resolved in the best possible way, exchanging accurate information with the parties in conflict in view to solve the problem together, embracing negotiations so that, a compromise can be reached, Avoiding an open

discussion of differences between conflicting parties and sticking to own solution to a problem.

Effective communication is therefore, essential in analysis of conflicts in the banking sector as well as in identifying their root causes. The findings showed that, the causes of conflicts in the banking sector are varied. Resolution of various forms of conflicts would therefore, require specific strategies since the root causes may be unique.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Although Unibank Ghana Limited is one of the most competitive banks in Kumasi and Ghana as a whole, there are several ways in which this can be further strengthened and sustained. It would be important for management of Unibank to carry out the following:

- The bank's management and head should seek to embrace open systems where everyone is set to air their views and the areas of conflict discussed openly.
- In addition, they should encourage democratic representation in the choice of leaders namely; Department heads, branch support supervisors and team members. This would help in eliminating the perceived feeling of discrimination or favouritism amongst co-workers, subordinates and superiors.
- The bank should also seek to educate all the stakeholders on the best way of solving conflicts. This can be achieved by organizing a seminar that will create awareness to employers and employees about the negative effects of conflict and act as mediators in conflict resolution in the organization. It will also serve to identify the parties involved in conflict and exposing them to the other branch mates through the intranet so that, they face shame and deter from doing the acts in future.

- The management should strive to treat the employees in the best possible way. The employees should also embrace dialogue in resolution of conflicts. This can be enhanced through building of strong relationships between the management and the employees to an extent that they are free to speak out on issues that affect both parties. The management should also give equal opportunities to all employees and offer rewards for every effort achieved by the employee no matter how little it is.
- Managements should implement a system that promotes employees to own the organization's rules instead of imposing on them. The organization should regularly undertake stakeholders' satisfaction surveys to gauge the attitude of employers and employees towards various approaches to governance especially the communication channels. The management team should also embrace guidance and counselling programme since its one of the best way to deter destructive mechanisms of resolving both interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts especially amongst employees. Guidance and counselling is the most appropriate to control spread of bad inner feelings.

5.5 RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Future researchers interested in the area could also delve into the other variables that equally contribute to the management of conflict in the bank which the current study could not cover.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please indicate the correct answer by ticking in the box

1. Most organizations would be better off if conflict can be eliminated. Yes[☐] No[☐]
2. An organization structure in which certain subordinates have two bosses should be avoided as much as possible. Yes[☐] No[☐]
3. Conflicts with our opponent are best resolved by both parties compromising a bit. Yes[☐] No[☐]
4. When conflict arises, what are the principles you stand on.....
.....
.....
5. What preferred style of conflict resolution do you stand on.....
.....
.....
6. Does conflict usually arises in the organization? Yes[☐] No[☐]
7. Does conflict lower productivity of the organization? Yes[☐] No[☐]
8. Does conflict help in solving individual differences? Yes[☐] No[☐]
9. Does management struggle in resolving conflict in the organization? Yes[☐] No[☐]
10. Can conflict affect the employee psychologically? Yes[☐] No[☐]
11. What brings about conflict in an organization? Yes[☐] No[☐]
12. What type of conflict prevails in the organization?
 - a. Inter-personal [☐] b. Intra-personal [☐] c. Inter-group [☐] d. Intra-group[☐]
13. Does the indirect approach to conflict management reduce conflict? Yes[☐] No [☐]
14. Does it take a longer time or period for managers to solve conflict when it arises? Yes[☐] No[☐]
15. Who benefits from conflict? Employee[☐] Employers[☐] Both [☐] None[☐]
16. Which people are responsible for managing conflict in the organization?