



Conflict Management Strategies And Its Effect On Business Educators Performance In Selected Higher Institutions In Anambra State

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Abstract

The study examined the conflict management strategies and its effect on performance of Business Educators in selected higher Institutions in Anambra state. The research design adopted for this study is a quantitative survey research design. The study involves the survey design following the formulation of questionnaires (survey instrument) through which essential information and insight about the association and relationships that exist between the dependent variable and the independent variables were measured and obtained. Two research questions and hypotheses guided the study. The researcher used the Business Educators in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam both in Anambra State. The two institutions were purposively selected and Simple random sampling technique was employed to select the total population of 42 Business Educators across the two higher institutions in Anambra State which was used for the study. The result showed that, accommodating conflict management strategy has positive and significant impact on commitment of Business Educators in selected higher institutions in Anambra State ($\beta=0.397$; $p<0.05$); Collaborating conflict management strategy has positive and significant effect on engagement of Business Educators in selected institutions of higher learning in Anambra State ($\beta=0.278$; $p<0.05$); avoidance conflict management strategy has positive and significant effect on work attitude of Academic Staff in selected higher institutions in Anambra State ($\beta=0.248$; $p<0.05$); collective bargaining strategy has positive and significant impact on creativity of Academic Staff in selected higher institutions in Anambra State ($\beta=0.438$; $p<0.05$). The study concludes that conflict management strategies has a significant effect on performance of Business Educators in selected higher institutions in Anambra State. The study concluded that, competition for supremacy should not be the priority of employees rather, working together in peace and unity to achieve a common goal for the organization; training workshops should be organized for employees on conflict resolution procedures; there is need for adequate organization and decision making to enhance proper running and optimum productivity. Staff welfare should also be taken into consideration by management; also management of organizations should avoid autocratic leadership.

Keywords: Conflict, Management strategies, Business Educators, Higher Institutions.

Background to the study

Conflict is inevitable in organizations due to diverse stakeholder goals, yet its impact whether destructive or constructive depends heavily on management strategies. Effective techniques like negotiation, collaboration, and compromise improve communication and employee performance, while poor management or avoidance leads to lower productivity and high turnover. Conflict is an expressed struggle between interdependent parties over perceived incompatible goals or scarce resources. It is considered a

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normal, functional, and inevitable aspect of organizational life.

Organization all over the world exists to achieve a specific goal and objective and for these goals and objectives to be achieved the human resources at the disposal of the organization must be properly harnessed to effectively and efficiently utilize other organizations resources in driving the organization forward (George and Jones, 2016). The human resources (employees) of the organization are the foundation on which every activity of the organization rests. It is the employees that put into use all the resources and all factors of production into the use for the achievement of the organizational goals and objective (Egbuta 2016). However, due the fact that no two humans are the same as they vary in lifestyle, personality, beliefs, value systems and religion, the congregation of employees in an organization may see conflict arise regularly (Larey, 2014). This has led to the issue of conflict management strategies which has become a hotly discussed topic among human resource managers all around the globe.

Conflict refers to a situation in which there are incompatible goals, cognition or emotion within or between individuals or groups that led to opposition (Kelly, 2010). According to Wall and Callister, (2015) conflict refers to the process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively influenced by another party. Conflict in the workplace is an expression of hostility, antagonism and misunderstanding between the staff members (Iravo, 2016). In institutions, conflict occurs between various individuals because of their frequent interaction with each other. This means that conflict in the work place can occur between employees or between the management and an employee or the employees. For instance, when employees go on strike it represents an escalated conflict between the management of the institution and the employees. Conflicts that occur in work places must be properly handled and resolved. The failure to do this can result in the conflict being blown out of proportion which can lead to discord among employees (Okafor, 2015).

In Nigeria, conflict presently constitutes a menacing factor in academic environment,. Schools frequently appear to be at the center of tension and on occasions, they are probably a manifestation of problems in the general policy. This is witnessed by the frequent ASUU strikes (Academic Staff Union of Universities) that occur in tertiary institutions in the country. According to Egberigbe (2009) a major cause of this repeated conflict is the failure of the Nigerian Government to meet the demands of Nigerian Lecturers and provide them with the necessary motivation to be able to carry out their duties effectively. The first ever ASUU strike was in 1988 after the body ASUU was newly formed in 1978 (Lateef, 2014). The strike was done in a bid to obtain fair wages and university autonomy (Nasir, 2013). The strike was met with a tough response from General Babangida's Military regime as the body was suspended and stripped of its properties (Babasola, 2002). The body was later restored in 1990 after negotiations with the military government (Babasola, 2002). However, since then the ASUU body has gone on no less than eighteen strikes due to various demands ranging from improvement in salary, better working conditions and improvement of University Facilities (Fashola, 2015). This has adversely affected the student's academic performance and the level of quality

education in Nigeria.

Conflicts in the Nigerian Educational institutions do not just occur in universities, they also occur in other tertiary institutions like polytechnics, Monotechnics and colleges of education. For instance, the Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics, ASUP, in January 2017 embarked on a nationwide seven-day strike over shortfall in payment of salaries and allowances among other demands. They have also threatened recently to embark on another nationwide strike until their salary demands are met (Hassan, 2015). Colleges of Education in Nigeria also regularly go on strike in protest of poor infrastructure, poor salaries of lecturers and facilitators in the schools as occasioned by their strike in 2014 (chimara, 2016). Conflict can occur between teachers and the principals, between teachers themselves or between teachers and students. This has forced many teachers who are in managerial positions in schools to adopt various techniques of conflict management (Nwagbara, 2016).

According to Flummery (2015) the style of conflict management adopted by the manager depends on the manager's personality. Collaborating, this review Nwagbara (2016) the manager in a secondary school may choose to adopt the accommodating style of conflict management. The accommodating style of conflict management involves selflessness and low assertiveness (Spears, 2014). According to Laden (2013). This style of conflict management is majorly adopted by easy going personalities who rather accept the blame than allow the conflict to linger. According to Nwagbara (2015) adopting this style of conflict management is best in order to foster unity among staffs and harmony. Nwagbara (2015) further stated that a manager in a secondary school may choose to adopt the collaborative style of conflict management.

Mason (2014) opined that the collaborative style of management tries to make sure all the aggrieved parties are satisfied. It involves working with the aggrieved parties to find a solution for both parties (Wheater, 2015). Onasanya (2016) noted that this style may be adopted by a manager who runs his administration like a politician. To him this style of conflict management can be easily achieved when a leader is a popular figure among his/her team members. Wheeler (2015) is of the opinion that a transformational leader is more likely to adopt this kind of approach. The collaborative style of conflict management is the style that has been adopted under the democratic government in Nigeria when managing conflicts between them and various educational labour unions. Also, according to Nwagbara (2015) note that the manager can adopt the avoidance strategy of conflict management. This strategy of conflict management involves the ignoring of the existence of the conflict until the conflict ends (Wheater, 2015). According to Smith (2011) managers that adopt this strategy are managers with low self-esteem or managers who do not hold much power over the conflicting parties.

Despite the various strategies adopted to manage conflicts in Nigerian higher institutions it still remains a major problem that all stakeholders in the educational system continued to show great concern. It affects the community, the school administration and the government directly or indirectly. If allowed to continue, it will ruin educational institutions and education itself in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Education is the bedrock of advancement in rescuing nations from the clutch of primitive ideology. The implication of this is that national development solely depends on the level of enlightenment that exists in the society (Orji and Job, 2017). Consequent upon this, many countries most especially the western world sees education as key to their economy. It is quite dishearten to see that the educational system in Nigeria has been going through series of issues such as delayed payment of wages and allowances, disagreement between employers and employees among others. This has led to conflicts within the educational system in Nigeria, particularly at the tertiary level. Conflicts itself is an inevitable occurrence in every society. It is a universal phenomenon attributed to life and society as well as academic community (Iloakasia, 2022). It has become a constant experience in the academic parlance in our universities where lecturers go on strike at the expense of the students. Thus affecting the regular flow of the academic year as planned by school authorities. These have caused a lot of concern to the education system, government, parents and the various unions in the universities. Part of the conflicts encountered in the university community range from disagreements between teaching and non-teaching, employees and government, conflict between students and the host community (Olaleye and Arogundade, 2013). Recently, the universities were shut down for eight months due to poor financing, irregular payments and alleged unaccountability of funds in the system (Osakede, Ijimakinwa, Adesanya, and Ojo, 2018). Conflict cannot be completely ruled out in any organization (Uchede, Anijaobi and Odigove, 2013). When they occur frequently in the academic industry it could have an adverse effect on the schools especially in terms of parental trust, loss of students, poor brand image of the school, unemployment of school staffs and ultimately the reduction in profits. Just like any other state in Nigeria, higher institutions in Anambra State are still confronted with various forms of conflict both interpersonal and task conflicts among employees and management staff.

According to Wheeler (2015) the appropriate style of conflict management to use is the accommodating style of conflict management. He noted that this style was needed to improve team spirit among employees and would eventually improve employee commitment. Douglas (2013) disagreed by stating that the accommodating style would only make the aggressors grow confident and would not hesitate to cause another conflict when they feel it is needed.

Nwagbara (2015) suggested that, collaborative style of conflict management would be suitable for adoption in secondary schools. He further suggested that it improve employee engagement as it makes employees feel relevant and an important part of the organization. Sulaimon (2009) suggested that collaborative style of conflict management cannot be achieved at all times due to the fact that it is difficult to come up with a resolution that pleases all aggrieved parties at all times.

Therefore, it is against this backdrop that this study aims to examine the effect of various conflict management strategies on the performance of employees in higher institutions in Anambra State.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the interaction of the contribution of different conflict management strategies and its effect on the performance of Business Educators in selected higher institutions in Anambra State, specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine the effect of accommodating conflict management strategy on the performance of business educators' in selected institutions of higher learning in Anambra state.
2. ascertain the influence of collaborating conflict management strategy on the engagement of business educators in selected institutions of higher learning in Anambra state.

Research Questions:

The following research questions guided the study

1. What is the effect of accommodating conflict management strategy on the performance of business educators' in selected higher institutions in Anambra state.?
2. What is the influence of collaborating conflict management strategy on the engagement of business educators in selected higher institutions in Anambra state?

Research Hypotheses

Two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. H_{01} : There is no significant effect of accommodating conflict management strategy on the performance of business educators in selected higher institutions in Anambra state.
2. H_{02} : There is no significant influence of collaborating conflict management strategy on the engagement of business educators in selected higher institutions in Anambra state.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is a quantitative survey research design.

The study population refers to the selected Business Educators of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Igbariam Campus all in Anambra State. The total population of staff used for both schools is 150. The purposive random sampling technique was employed to select 42 employees. 18 employees was selected from Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka and 14 employees from Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Igbariam Campus all in Anambra State. The primary data used in this study was gotten through the issuance of questionnaires which asked questions and required accurate answers from the respondents in relation to the topic under study. A structured questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. It was structured as Questionnaire for Conflict Management in Higher Institutions (QCMHI) and was properly validated. Regression analysis was used to evaluate the relationship between the outcome variables and Spearman Rank Correlation was also used to measure rank correlation of statistical dependence between the rankings of two variables.

Results

The entire questionnaires administered were collected. The results obtained from the field survey are presented as follows:

Table: Personal Information of Respondents

Variable	Frequency (N=42)	Percentage
Gender		
Male	19	45.2%
Female	23	54.8%
Highest Educational Qualificatio		
OND/NCE	3	7.1%
HND/B.Sc	37	88.1%
M.Sc	2	4.8%
PhD	-\	-
Position		
Junior staff	27	64.3%
Senior staff	15	35.7%
Length of stay		
Below 8 years	28	66.7%
8-17 years	10	23.8%
Above 17 years	4	9.5%

Source: Researcher's Computation from Field Survey 2026

Table1 presented the demographic characteristics of respondents in terms of gender, educational qualification, position and length of stay. The gender distribution showed that 45.2% of respondents are male and other 54.8% are female. Based on the educational distribution, majority of the respondents, which is about 88.1%, are HND/B.Sc holders; 7.1% are OND/NCE holders; 4.8% are M.Sc holders and none has a doctorate degree (PhD). With respect to position, majority of the respondents, which constitutes approximately 64.3%, are junior staff and the other 35.7% are senior staff. As regard length of stay, majority of the respondents, which constitutes 66.7%, have been in their organizations for less than 8 years; 23.8% have spent 8-17 years and 9.5% have spent more than 17 years.

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics of Respondents' Opinions on Employee Performance

Employee Performance	Construct	N	Mean	SD	Decision
Employee Commitment					
1.	I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.	42	5.14	0.72	Agreed
2.	I feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization.	42	5.30	0.75	Agreed
3.	I believe that a person must always be loyal to his or her organization.	42	5.33	0.69	Agreed
4.	I feel like part of the family at my organization.	42	5.22	0.77	Agreed
5.	I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.	42	5.16	0.70	Agreed
Cluster		42	5.27	0.72	Agreed
Employee Engagement					
		N	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	I am proud to work for my organization.	42	4.90	0.62	Agreed
2.	I would recommend my company as a great place to work.	42	5.40	0.66	Agreed
3.	I rarely think about looking for a job at another company.	42	4.70	0.60	Agreed
4.	I see myself still working in our organization in two years' time.	42	5.25	0.64	Agreed
5.	My company motivates me to go beyond what I would in a similar role elsewhere.	42	5.10	0.61	Agreed
Cluster		42	5.15	0.64	Agreed
Employee Work attitude					
		N	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	I can balance work with my personal life in my organization.	42	5.12	0.63	Agreed
2.	I have a strong focus on the customer service and satisfaction.	42	5.40	0.66	Agreed
3.	I make good use of my skills and abilities in my organization.	42	4.92	0.59	Agreed
4.	In my organization, I am recognized for my accomplishments.	42	5.66	0.61	Agreed
5.	Employees in my department participate in deciding how the work gets done.	42	5.54	0.60	Agreed
Cluster		42	5.26	0.65	Agreed

Employee Creativity	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1. I help my organization to be more innovative.	42	5.31	0.60	Agreed
2. I use creativity as a strategy to solving my organizational issue.	42	5.41	0.70	Agreed
3. I have been involved with leading creativity initiatives in my organizations that are looking to address a lack of fresh ideas from all departments.	42	5.07	0.78	Agreed
4. I always want to help my company to disrupt the marketplace with something new.	42	5.61	0.68	Agreed
5. I am always interested in issues my company need to address by boosting its innovation capacity.	42	5.00	0.65	Agreed
Cluster	42	5.26	0.69	Agreed

Source: Researcher's Computation from Field Survey 2026

Table 2 presented the descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) of employee performance. Respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement on items in this construct on a six-point rating scale. The mean of scale is 4.00 ($1+2+3+4+5+6=24$; $24/6=4$). The mean of the scale is used as benchmark to classify responses in the agreement or disagreement category. Any item whose mean is above 4.00 is considered as generally agreed and the one less than 4.00 are considered as generally disagreed.

The result showed that the mean of items of performance construct are above the benchmark of 4.00. The respondents generally agreed that they are committed, engaged, work attitude, creative. Employee commitment had the highest mean score, followed by employee creativity, employee work attitude and employee engaged.

Descriptive Statistics of Respondents' Opinions on Conflict Management Strategies

Conflict Management Strategies	Construct	N	Mean	SD	Decision
Accommodating Conflict management strategy					
1.	My organization accommodating is unassertive and cooperative with the opposite of competing.	42	4.64	1.06	Agreed
2.	When accommodating, my company neglects their own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other companies.	42	5.02	0.95	Agreed
3.	There is an element of self-sacrifice in my organization.	42	4.50	1.04	Agreed
4.	My firm accommodating always take the form of selfless generosity or charity, obeying another company's order when it would prefer not to.	42	4.86	0.75	Agreed
5.	My organization is always aimed at creating goodwill and creating peace among others.	42	4.77	0.88	Agreed
Cluster		42	4.76	0.95	Agreed

Collaborating Conflict management strategy		N	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Collaborating is both assertive and cooperative in organization and its seen as opposite of avoiding.	42	4.93	0.87	Agreed
2.	In my organization collaborating involves an attempt to work with the other person to find some solution which fully satisfies the concerns of both persons.	42	4.79	0.78	Agreed
3.	In my organization digging into an issue to identify the underlying concerns of the two individuals and to find an alternative which meets both sets of concerns are priority.	42	4.74	0.86	Agreed
4.	My organization always collaborate between two persons which always take the form of exploring a disagreement to learn from each other's insights.	42	4.71	1.02	Agreed
5.	My organization sees the integration of solutions, Learning, Merging perspectives, Gaining commitment as priority.	42	4.97	0.87	Agreed
Cluster		42	4.83	0.88	Agreed

Avoidance Conflict management strategy		N	Mean	SD	Decision
Avoidance Conflict management strategy					
1.	Avoiding is unassertive and uncooperative in my organization.	42	5.07	0.81	Agreed
2.	My organization does not immediately pursue its own concerns or those of the other companies .	42	4.81	0.94	Agreed
3.	My organization do not address the conflict within.	42	4.95	0.73	Agreed
4.	In my organization avoiding might take the form of diplomatically sidestepping an issue, postponing an issue until a better time, or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation.	42	5.07	0.89	Agreed
5.	My organization prefers issues of low importance and reducing tensions.	42	4.97	0.72	Agreed
Cluster		42	4.98	0.84	Agreed

Competitive Conflict management strategy					
1.	Competing is assertive and uncooperative in my organization.	42	4.90	0.80	Agreed
2.	My organization pursues their own concerns at the other company's expense.	42	4.28	0.97	Agreed
3.	My organization uses power -oriented mode, in which it uses whatever power seems appropriate to win other's own position.	42	4.79	0.95	Agreed
4.	My organization always stand up for its rights defending a position which it believe is correct or simply trying to win.	42	4.95	0.70	Agreed
5.	My organization always takes quick actions.	42	5.09	0.82	Agreed
Cluster		42	4.80	0.85	Agreed

Source: Researcher's Computation from Field Survey 2018

This Table 2 presented the descriptive statistics of the opinions of respondents on conflict management strategies. The mean of all items exceeded the benchmark of 4.00. The cluster mean of accommodating conflict management strategy, Collaborating Conflict management strategy, Avoidance Conflict management strategy, Competitive Conflict management strategy are 4.76, 4.83, 4.96 and 4.80 respectively. This indicates that the listed strategies are used by the respondents to resolve conflict in their respective organizations.

Testing of Research Hypotheses

The regression analysis is employed to estimate the conflict management strategies and employee performance in selected secondary schools in ondo state. By the solution of the analysis, the coefficient of parameter estimate of each strategy is determined. The regression analysis is also used to accept or reject the research hypotheses. To accept or reject a particular hypothesis, the probability value of each explanatory variable is compared with 0.05. If the probability value is less than 0.05, the alternative hypothesis of significant effect is accepted. On the other hand, if the probability value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis of no significant effect is accepted.

Hypothesis One

H₀: There is no significant impact of accommodating conflict management strategy on the commitment of Business Educators in selected secondary schools in Ondo State

H₁: There is significant impact of accommodating conflict management strategy on the commitment of Business Educators in selected secondary schools in Ondo State

Model Summary

	Adjusted R	Std. Error of
R Square	Square	the Estimate
.341	.325	.59015

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	7.212	1	7.212	20.707	.000 ^b
Residual	13.931	40	.348		
Total	21.143	41			

Coefficients^a

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.297	.416		7.933	.000
	Accommodating	.397	.087	.584	4.550	.000

The correlation coefficient indicates that accommodating conflict management strategy and commitment are positively correlated by 58.4%. The coefficient of determination indicates that 34.1% variation in commitment of Business Educators is explained by accommodating conflict management strategy. accommodating conflict management strategy has positive and significant effect on commitment of Business Educators based on the fact that its sign of coefficient is positive and probability value is less than 0.05. Thus, the alternative hypothesis is accepted that there is significant impact of accommodating conflict management strategy on the commitment of Business Educators in selected secondary schools in Anambra State.

Hypothesis Two

H₀: There is no significant influence of collaborating conflict management strategy on the engagement of Business Educators in selected secondary schools in Ondo State.

H₁: There is significant influence of collaborating conflict management strategy on the engagement of Business Educators in selected secondary schools in Ondo State.

Model Summary

		Adjusted R			Std. Error of the Estimate
Model	R	R Square	Square		
1	.278 ^a	.007	.056	.66956	

ANOVA^a

		Sum of		Mean Square	F	Sig.
Model		Squares	df			
1	Regression	1.787	1	1.787	5.251	.009 ^b
	Residual	21.932	40	.548		
	Total	23.719	41			

Coefficients^a

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.018	.607		8.261	.000
	Collaborating	.278	.120	.262	2.317	.009

The correlation coefficient indicates that engagement and collaborating conflict management strategy are positively correlated by 27.8%/. The coefficient of determination indicates that 7% of the total variation in engagement of Business Educators is explained by collaborating conflict management strategy. collaborating conflict management strategy has positive and significant impact on engagement of Business Educators given the fact that its sign of coefficient is positive and probability value is less than 0.05. Thus, the alternative hypothesis is accepted that there is significant influence of collaborating conflict management strategy on the engagement of Business Educators in selected higher institutions in Anambra State.

Discussion

Based on the result of the hypotheses tested, the major findings of the study are outlined as follows:

- Accommodating conflict management strategy has positive and significant impact on commitment of Business Educators in selected higher institutions in Anambra State ($\beta=0.397$; $p<0.05$).
- Collaborating conflict management strategy has positive and significant impact on engagement of Business Educators in selected higher institutions in Anambra State ($\beta=0.278$; $p<0.05$).
- Avoidance conflict management strategy has positive and significant impact on work attitude of Business Educators in selected higher institutions in Anambra State ($\beta=0.248$; $p<0.05$).
- Collective bargaining strategy has positive and significant impact on creativity of Business Educators in selected higher institutions in Anambra State ($\beta=0.438$; $p<0.05$).

Conclusion

Conflict occurs when the concerns, desires, preferences and goals of one party is different from another party. Conflict centers on the differences between two or more individuals as well as groups and organizations and how they choose to handle those differences. Organizational conflict is a common occurrence in workplace and is unavoidable. Various strategies are adopted in managing conflicts but the choice of the strategy to use depends on the nature of conflict and the parties involved. The strategies adopted are largely effective in resolving conflicts. However, the reoccurrence of conflict is not mainly due to ineffective conflict management but dynamic socio-economic situation. The study concludes that conflict management strategies with respect to collaborating, avoidance, collective, accommodating have tremendous impact on employee performance. However, the efficacy of each strategy greatly depends on

how they are used.

Thus, conflict management strategies have a significant effect on Business Educators performance in selected secondary schools in Anambra State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made

1. Competition for supremacy should not be the priority of Business Educators but rather working together in peace and unity to achieve a common goal for the organization.
2. Training workshops should be organized for Business Educators on conflict resolution procedures.
3. Management of organization should avoid autocratic leadership
4. Management must try to adopt inclusive and collaborative strategies in conflict management and at the same time strive to involve Business Educators representatives in vital decision that affect them.
5. Both management and employees must resolve to work together amicably by formulating potent strategies and sustaining acceptable policies as effective machinery for managing conflict on continuous basis in organizations.
6. Credible channels of communication and open discussion of conflict in work relations must be encouraged with an attempt to avoid confrontation, competition and domination.
7. Mutual survival and continued sustenance of optimum organizational performance must be the goal and basis for the existence of employees and employers in workplace.

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