A Review of Workplace Conflicts and Employee Performance in Tamale Metropolitan Assembly of Northern Region, Ghana

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Abstract
The study investigated the effects of workplace conflict on employee performance at the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly from where a sample of 194 was drawn. The study adopted descriptive research design. Data was collected with questionnaires, analyzed with SPSS version 26 and the results presented in tables, interpreted and discussed. Results showed that workplace conflicts in TMA were largely interpersonal. Poor communication was rated the highest cause of the conflicts. Negative effects of the conflicts include: reduction of morale of workers, creation of tension and anxiety that weakens abilities of employees to work well, lack of essential information needed for effective job delivery, delayed delivery of assignments and project failures. Positive outcomes of the conflicts are that: they increase employees' creativity and innovation towards doing things, strengthen bonds and improve relationships when well-managed, they bring on board effective and efficient utilization of scarce resources in the Assembly emanating from best decisions. The study concluded that the overall effect of conflicts in TMA on employees' performance is negative; resulting in non-optimization of employees' output. The study recommended that the Assembly should allow free flow of information by improving communication to establish problems facing employees and to promptly address them.
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1. Introduction
Conflicts are predictive and form part of human and organizational life. This is because, organizational stakeholders such as managers and staff have goals that are often incompatible (Jones et al., 2000; Friedberg, 2005). Krone & Steimel (2013) add that organizational conflict among employees is not simply inevitable, but also very complex. According to Ramani & Zhimin (2010), though agreements might arrive between conflicting parties, their values, interests, and perceptions might not necessarily change. Conflict of interest generates structural differentiated character of contemporary work organizations (Longe, 2015). Because of scarcity of positions, freedom and resources, conflict of interest arises (Hotepo et al., 2010). According to Messmer (2006), management executives of organizations spend double, the time, to settle disputes among employees than they did decades ago. Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) are not immune to conflict. Conflict among Coordinating Directors, Chief Executives and staff have been existing at various MMDAs (Bales & Robbins, 2001).

Conflict affects the physical and mental health of employees by creating tension, stress, guilt, frustration and hostility which also affect performance of staff (Bales & Robbins, 2001). Gisema (2013) states that if workplace conflict remains unresolved, it results in reduced motivation, initiatives, poor communication, employee turnover, transfer of employees, affect decision making, planning and implementation of projects and hinder prosperity of the affected institution. Also, George, Miroga & Omweri (2013) insist that an unmanaged conflict within an organization can lead to poor performance, job dissatisfaction, low productivity, and bad employee relationship. Nushann's (2013) study indicates that poor management of conflict and poor application of conflict resolution measures significantly impact performance of employees. Henry (2009) believes that workplace conflict is unpleasant since competition for job, resources, recognition and security is high among employees.

Armstrong (2006) states that organizations can manage conflicts by identifying their sources and by strategizing measures to control them. Managing conflicts properly with the application of the best conflict management procedures improves organizations' output by using limited resources, and helps to achieve organizations' objectives (Awan & Anjum, 2015). Awan & Anjum argue that consistent and suitable feedback as well as appropriate conflict resolution mechanisms also promote employee job satisfaction which subsequently will lead to enhanced job performance. Also, Abdul & Sehar (2015) share similar view that a well-managed conflict promotes positive work relationships and higher productivity.

The forgoing discourse presents two sides of conflict outcomes in organizations, thus, a paradox worth

unraveling. This discourse, generated in the authors, the motivation to establish the realities with empirical data within an organizational setting. Whiles our search revealed an extant literature on conflicts in various organizations, not much exists on the local government setting. This influenced the choice to situate the study on MMDAs, focusing on the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly (TMA) of the Northern Region to identify the types of conflict occurring there, their causes and more importantly, to assess how employees' performance is affected by such conflicts.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Workplace Conflicts
Conflict in the workplace is an essential part of the daily operations of organizations. Dealing with such conflict appropriately and timely ensures a healthy environment for the progress of work (Brookins & Media, 2008). Workplace conflict takes the form of a psychological and behavioural response towards the ideas and views that people have about others in reaching their goals (Koranteng et al., 2019). Naturally, conflict occurs amongst people. People are diversified, thus, wherever they meet, either at work, as a group or an association, conflict is likely to occur (Nwaoma & Omeire, 2014). The conflict situation becomes apparent and rife in the event that personal and corporate expectations are set and individuals have to coexist to meet these expectations. Conflict in organizations take the form of dispute resulting from varied interests and incompatibilities in goals and values. Darling & Walker (2001) believe that because of these disputes, people become frustrated in achieving their objectives, thus, leading to more conflict situations.

Todd (2008) identifies types of workplace conflicts to include intrapersonal conflict, intragroup conflict, intergroup conflict, interpersonal conflict, conflict emanating from differences in leadership and conflicts relating to hierarchy. Other types of conflict include worker/management conflict, superior/subordinate tensions, conflict from differences in power (Ajzen, 1991). Conflicts emanating from differences in supervisory styles between departments are glaring in many organizations. Also, there can be clashes resulting from style of work, position/rank and inequity in pay. Thus, workplace conflict encompasses the holistic behaviours and attitudes within the organization that are likely to be in opposing state either between staff of the same level or between lower level staff and top management (Todd, 2008).

Conflict sources in organizations are widespread but mainly can be categorized as communicational (clashes emerging from communication errors), structural (clashes connected with authoritative jobs), and personal (coming from individual contrasts) (Tjosvold, 1998).

However, each categorization has its unique features and might mean differently to different people (George & Jones, 2003). Some common causes of workplace conflict include poor communication, difference in personalities, value differences, competition and lack of role definition/role ambiguity (Baliyan & Mokoena, 2018).

Poor communication is a key triggering factor of conflict in organizations arising from either differences in communication styles or general failure to communicate (Greenberg et al, 2007). It has the tendency of lowering productivity and decreasing staff morale. When major decisions are taken within an organization and such decisions are not properly communicated to staff who are not involved in the decision making process, they tend to accept rumors about such decisions which may affect their job hence the tendency of generating conflict within the organization, which ultimately will affect job performance and satisfaction (Tiwari, 2016; Awan & Ibrahim, 2015). When there is open and honest communication as well as effective collaboration, work relationships are enhanced and people are free to bring out innovative ideas thereby promoting the overall morale of employees within the organization (Awan & Ibrahim, 2015).

Employees within an organizational setting have varied backgrounds and experiences that commonly define their personalities. When staff within the organization refuse to accept such variations in individual personalities, there is the likelihood of conflicts arising (Ramani & Zhimin, 2010). Also, individual values, beliefs, opinions and interest differ between and among staff within an organization, which is most visible particularly, with the presence of generational gaps between, and among staff. Conflicts might not necessarily arise from these difference but the failure to accept such differences by staff (AL-Shourah, 2015; Pathak, 2010).

When competition within workplace becomes unhealthy, it is likely to cause conflict especially, when staff are competing for some benefits including promotion, salary increment, and position among others. Such competitions if not properly managed will lead to sabotage between and among staff which will create an unfriendly environment for work progress. Unhealthy competition in an organization discourages teamwork whilst promoting individualism. When roles are not clearly defined for staff, there is the likelihood of conflict arising. When staff do not know who does what, whilst others may be overburdened, others will have just little to do and this generates conflict from role-related pressures (Hotepo et al., 2010; Henry, 2009; Duke, 2014). Conflict at the workplace is therefore a common experience and practice.

Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies in Ghana are mandated by article 245 (a) of the Constitution of Ghana (1992) to formulate and execute plans, programmes and strategies for the effective

mobilization of resources necessary for the overall development of their localities. Their functions include but not limited to: waste management and sanitation, public health education, provision of education, support for agricultural extension, and rural electrification, town and country planning, construction and maintenance of roads, public buildings and markets (Walker, 2013). In the execution of their mandate, MMDAs engender conflicts which affect employees' performance, worth studying.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey. A descriptive cross-sectional survey because the researchers intended to probe respondents by assessing the frequency of specific attributes, practices, attitudes, knowledge and beliefs of the population and how often certain empirical phenomena occur adding to the effects of workplace conflict on employees performance. According to Kothari (2004:37), the "descriptive design is concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular individual, or of a group". The population of the study comprised 378 employees from the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly. Tamale is the capital city of the Metropolis and also the capital city of the Northern Region. The Metropolis is the only Metropolitan Assembly in the five Regions in the North of Ghana.

Miller & Brewe's (2003) sample size determination formula was used to draw the sample size from the population:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N\,(\alpha)^2}$$

Where n = required sample size, 1= constant, N = population, α = significance level/error margin. The sample size was pegged at 95% confidence level (0.05 significance level). For a total staff of 378, the sample size was calculated as:

$$n = \frac{378}{1 + 378(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 194.34 \approx 194$$

The sample size for this study was, thus, 194 employees; drawn proportionally from the various Departments and Units of the Assembly as in Table 1.

Table 1: Study Population and Sample Size

Department/Unit	No. of Staff	Sample
Works	22	18
Waste Management and Environmental Health	160	62
Administration	29	23
Human Resource	2	2
Planning	9	8
Budget	6	6
Internal Audit	7	7
Procurement/Supply	4	4
Management Information System	15	13
Statistics	2	2
Finance	11	10
Records	9	8
Transport	20	17
Security	10	9
Sanitary Labourers	72	42
Total	**378**	**194**

Source: Authors' construct, 2019

3.1 Sampling Techniques and Procedures

Researchers use various sampling techniques to generate their sample size. This helps to manage data and cost by interacting with some members of the general population other than the general population itself (Saunders et al., 2007). 194 respondents were selected through purposive and simple random samples. Respondents such as heads of departments/units were purposively sampled given their knowledge on workplace conflict. Simple random sampling was used in cases where two or more staff were found in a department/unit and were all qualified to respond to the questionnaires.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Primary and secondary data were employed in this study. Questionnaires were used to collect primary data. Questions were in closed choice-formats with room for additions and explanations where necessary. Secondary

data from journal articles and official documents from state institutions having oversight responsibilities over MMDAs complemented the primary data. SPSS version 26 was used to analyze data from the questionnaires. Results were presented in tables, interpreted and discussed.

4. Results and Discussions
4.1 Conflicts Occurring in Tamale Metropolitan Assembly
Table 2 shows the types of conflicts rated by respondents during the study as occurring at TMA.

Table 2: Conflicts occurring in Tamale Metropolitan Assembly
Key: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Not Sure, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

Type of Conflict	N	Mean
Interpersonal conflicts	194	3.93
Intra-group conflicts	194	3.57
Ethnic/communal conflicts	194	3.37
Leadership controversies	194	4.19
Labour-oriented conflicts	194	3.90
Financial/resources oriented conflicts	194	4.45
Role conflicts	194	4.07
Ideological conflicts	194	3.9
Union-management conflict	194	3.76
Procedural conflict	194	4.00
Intra-personal conflicts	194	3.97
Inter-group conflicts	194	4.18

Source: Field Survey, 2019

From Table 2, it was found that, aside ethnic/communal conflicts which respondents, with a mean response of 3.37 indicated they were not sure exists, the rest had mean responses equivalent to 4; indicating they occur in the Assembly. For instance, the results showed a mean response of 3.93, equal to 4 on interpersonal conflicts; which means that interpersonal conflicts exist in the TMA. It further established a mean response of 3.57, equivalent to 4, meaning that intra-group conflicts occur in the TMA. A similar view applied to role conflicts with a mean response of 4.07.

The study thus, found the following workplace conflicts in TMA: interpersonal conflicts, intra-group conflicts, leadership controversy conflicts, labour-oriented conflicts, financial/resources conflicts and role conflicts. The rest are ideological conflicts, union-management conflicts, procedural conflicts, intra-personal conflicts, and inter-group conflicts. Contrary to the findings of Akparep, Bagah & Teng-Zeng (2019), the conflicts in TMA did not manifest protests/unrests/revolts, violence and violent demonstration, boycotts/attempted boycotts of work, verbal assaults/abuse/scorn, insubordination and physical attacks.

The study investigated departments/units which experience the conflicts the most in TMA. It was revealed that 50.0% of the respondents were not sure the Statistics Unit experiences conflicts, 25.0% each agreed and disagreed that the Unit experiences conflicts. For the Administration Unit, 66.7% of the respondents strongly agreed that there is conflict. For Assistant Director's Office, 100% of the respondents disagreed strongly that there is conflict. For Management Information Systems, 60.0% of the respondents disagreed that there is conflict. At the Internal Audit Unit, 50.0% of the respondents disagreed that there is conflict. For the Waste Management Department, as high as 75.0% of the respondents indicated there exists conflicts. For the Registry, 100% of the respondents agreed that there is conflict. All respondents, (100%) strongly disagreed that there is conflict in the Transport Unit. For Finance Department, 100% of respondents disagreed there is conflict. At the Human Resource Unit, 66.6% of the respondents disagreed that there is conflict. For Department of Social Welfare and Community Development and the Revenue Mobilization Unit, 50.0% each of the respondents agreed that there is conflict. For Procurement Unit, as high as 80.0% of the respondents disagreed that there is conflict. The analysis showed that the Registry experiences conflicts the most in the Assembly (due to the high human interface as that is usually the first point of call to staff and visitors alike), followed by the Procurement Unit. Respondents described the situation as worrying which corroborates the views of Akparep, Bagah and & Teng-zeng (2019:26) that "there is nothing like small conflict" and that "every form of conflict is a source of worry so long as it is a distraction to the attainment of organizational goals".

4.2 Causes of Conflicts in Tamale Metropolitan Assembly
The study sought to establish causes of the conflicts in TMA. Table 3 illustrates these causes

Table 3: Causes of Conflict in TMA
Key: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Not Sure, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

Statements	N	M
Lack of team work	194	4.17
Difference in attitude	194	3.59
Poor communication	194	4.71
Lack of confidence	194	4.05
Inequitable treatment	194	3.5
Non consultation with employees on key issues affecting them	194	4.53
Cumbersome grievance and dispute resolution procedures	194	4.07
Nature of activities at work	194	3.65
Differences in perception	194	4.50
Unclear roles on the job	194	4.47
Lack of training opportunities	194	3.7
Bullying and harassment	194	3.85
Poor management styles in the organization	194	3.51

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The findings showed many causes of conflicts in TMA. These include: lack of team work, difference in attitude, poor communication and lack of confidence. Others are unfair treatment, ineffective discussions with employees about key issues that affect them, cumbersome grievance and dispute resolution procedures, the nature of activities at workplace and differences in perceptions. The rest are, unclear roles on the job, lack of training opportunities, bullying and harassment and poor management styles. The findings confirm Akparep' (2019) argument that communication gap and lack of representation and participation by employees in decision making processes of matters of concern lead to organizational conflicts.

Of these causes, poor communication is rated as the highest with a mean response of 4.71 which corroborates Bales & Robbins's (2001) argument that conflicts often occur at the MMDAs as a result of poor flow of information. Non consultation with employees on important issues affecting them with a mean response of 4.53 is the next key cause of the conflicts. This is followed by differences in perceptions of staff with a mean response of 4.50, equivalent to 5.

Thus, respondents strongly agreed that poor communication, non-consultation with employees on key issues affecting them and differences in perceptions of staff are the most frequent causes of conflicts in TMA. Respondents further agreed that the rest are causes of conflicts in the Assembly with mean responses equivalent to 4. These findings are similar to those of Nushann (2013), which showed that indistinct roles and poor group coherence cause organizational conflicts. However, the findings could not confirm Bales & Robbins's (2001) view that conflicts often occur when there is change of government as a result of affiliation and change of government priorities.

4.3 Effects of the Conflicts on Employee Performance in Tamale Metropolitan Assembly
The most important aspect of this study was to look at the effects of the conflicts on employee performance in TMA. Table 4 shows respondents' views on this.
Table 4: Effects of the Conflicts on Employee Performance in TMA
Key: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Not Sure, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

Conflicts in TMA result in:	N	Mean
Negative Outcomes		
A. Deliberately undermining and not co-operating with each other	194	4.48
B. Lack of essential information for effective job delivery	194	4.44
C. Increase in labour turn over	194	4.05
D. Reduction of morale of workers	194	4.58
E. Derailment of team work	194	3.59
F. Tension and anxiety that often weakens my ability to do my job well	194	4.50
G. Employees often been so emotionally drained due to the conflicts that it prevents them from contributing to their jobs effectively	194	3.53
H. Significantly affecting employees trust in Management negatively when ineffective conflict resolution procedures are used	194	3.60
I. Affecting the physical and mental health of employees by creating tension, stress, guilt, frustration and hostility which affects their performance	194	3.81
J. Wasting time and energy and costing money in managing	194	3.88

Conflicts in TMA result in:	N	Mean
K. Work disruptions	194	3.72
L. Project failures	194	3.55
M. Absenteeism and delayed delivery of assignments	194	3.58
Positive Outcomes:		
N. Strengthened bonds and improved relationships when well managed	194	3.61
O. The application of best courses of action	194	4.66
P. Effective and efficient utilization of scarce resources in the Assembly emanating from best decisions	194	391
Q. Increase in the TMA's performance as in achieving the organization's objectives	194	2.12
R. Challenging employees to think beyond their everyday routine boundaries	194	4.50
S. Increase in creativity and innovative ways of doing things	194	4.52
T. Improvement in communication when well managed	194	3.50

Source: Field Survey, 2019.

Table 4 groups the results under negative and positive outcomes of the conflicts on employees' performance in TMA. Under the negative effects, it was established that, respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that all that were captured by Table 4 are effects of the conflicts on employees performance in TMA. For instance, with mean responses of 4.58 and 4.5 (equivalent to 5), respondents strongly agreed that, reduction of morale of workers and creation of tension and anxiety that often weakens abilities of employees to do their job well are negative effects of the conflicts on performances of employees in TMA. Other effects of the conflicts respondents agreed as being negative on employees' performances in the Assembly include: employees deliberately undermining and not co-operating with each other on the job, lack of essential information needed for effective job delivery by employees, increase in labour turnover, derailment of team work and making employees often so emotionally drained and thus, preventing them from contributing to their jobs effectively. The rest are that the conflicts: significantly affect employees' trust in Management negatively when ineffective conflict resolution procedures are used, affect the physical and mental health of employees by creating tension, stress, guilt, frustration and hostility which in effect, affect performance on the job, waste time and energy and cost money in managing, disrupt work, lead to project failures and as well result in absenteeism and delayed delivery of assignments; all of which translate to poor employee performance and for that matter productivity in the TMA. Of all these, the mean responses were equivalent to 4, signifying respondents' agreement that they are the negative outcomes of the conflicts on employees' performance in TMA. The findings agree with Akparep, Ali & Boasu's (2021) that conflict distracts organizations' goal direction, lowers employees' morale, results in poor work quality, discourages commitment and demotivates workers; all of which result in low productivity. The findings also corroborate the arguments of George, Miroga & Omweri (2013) and Nushann's (2013) that unmanaged or poorly managed conflict within an organization can lead to poor performance, job dissatisfaction, low productivity and bad employee relationship.

Contrary to the traditionalist view that conflict is bad, dysfunctional, destructive and irrational and must be avoided (Robbins, 2001; Nushann, 2017), the study also showed some positive outcomes of conflicts on employees' performance in TMA. In Table 4, respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the positive outcomes pertain in TMA, except their disagreement with the proposition that the conflicts increase the TMA's performance as in achieving the organization's objectives. This view produced a mean response of 2.12; equivalent to 2 meaning respondents disagreed. Respondents strongly agreed that the conflicts challenge employees to think beyond their everyday routine boundaries and also increase in employees, creative and innovative ways of doing things. Respondents also agreed that the conflicts: strengthen bonds and improve relationships when well-managed, ensure the application of best courses of action, bring on board effective and efficient utilization of scarce resources that emanate from best decisions and improve communication when well managed. These findings are in line with the iinteractionist view. The interactionists have positive view of conflicts and inspire leaders to keep some continuous level of conflict that is appropriate to keep groups alive, self-reflective and imaginative and that without conflict, employees become static and non-responsive (Robbins, 2001; Nushann, 2013).

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study reviewed workplace conflicts and employee performance in Tamale Metropolitan Assembly. Workplace conflicts found in TMA include interpersonal clashes, leadership controversy conflicts and role conflicts. Causes of the conflicts include: poor communication (rated the highest cause), lack of team work, non-consultation with employees on key issues affecting them, unclear roles on the job and lack of training

opportunities. Negative outcomes of the conflicts include: reduction of morale of workers, creation of tension and anxiety that weaken employees' abilities to work well, lack of essential information needed for effective job delivery, derailment of team work and making employees emotionally drained thereby preventing them from contributing to their jobs effectively, affecting the physical and mental health of employees by creating tension, stress, guilt, frustration and hostility which affect performance on the job, wasting time and energy and costing money in managing, disrupting work, project failures and delaying delivery of assignments. The positive outcomes include: challenging employees to think beyond their everyday routine boundaries, increasing in employees, creative and innovative ways of doing things, strengthening of bonds and improved relationships when well-managed, application of best courses of action, effective and efficient utilization of scarce resources and improvement in communication when well managed. The study concluded that the overall effect of conflicts in TMA on employees performance is negative which results in non-optimization of employees output.

The study recommended that the Assembly should conduct regular meetings between management and employees, allow free flow of information by improving communication to establish the problems facing employees and to promptly address them. The Assembly should conduct training for all employees and allow for equal opportunities for employees. The Assembly should orient new and existing employees regularly on their job roles and encourage socialization to create harmonious relationships and minimize occurrences of conflicts.

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