

## **CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF ROAD TRANSPORT WORKERS IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

Road transport workers in Cross River State are currently affected with taskforce, relationship, and process related conflict. This ongoing struggle is consuming valuable workers time and resources. If not effectively managed, this conflict has the potential to escalate, resulting in significant employee and financial costs. This study examined conflict management strategies and organizational performance of road transport workers in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study had two research objectives, two research questions, and hypotheses. Review of related literature was carried out based on the variables of this study. Survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised of 206 employees. Census was adopted for the study. Fifteen items questionnaire was the instrument used for gathering data for the study. Conflict Management Strategies and Organizational Performance Questionnaire (CMSPQ) was the instrument used for data collection. Simple Linear Regression was used to test hypotheses. The hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance. Findings revealed that collective bargaining strategy and mediation strategy had significant influence on organizational performance of road transport workers in Cross River State. Road transport organizations and workers in the State desired recognition, better salaries, wages and great improvements in the terms and condition of work. However, in spite of government policies put in place including arbitration, communication, third party intervention and negotiation aimed at influencing road transport workers, some road transport workers are still not improved at the level expected of them. The study recommended among others that three partners (government, employers and employees) should imbibe good morality in their dealing to achieved collective bargaining strategy.

**Key words:** Conflict management strategies, collective bargaining strategy, mediation strategy and organizational performance



### **Introduction**

For any organization to perform effectively, interdependent individuals and groups must establish working relationships across organizational boundaries, between individuals and among groups. Individuals in organizations usually depend on one another for information, assistance and coordinated action. This interdependence may either foster cooperation or bred conflict (Etim, 2025). Conflict management strategy is one of the central concerns of activity in the organization (Otu, 2014). It is an integral part of human existence; inevitable in nature

and endemic to the organization. Organizational conflict commonly arises when workers interact and experience scarce organizational resources and goals.

The goal of conflict management is not necessarily to eliminate all disagreements, but rather to find ways to manage them in a constructive and positive manner that maintains relationships, promotes understanding, and leads to improved outcomes for all involved (Winardi, Prentice & Weaven, 2022). When conflict is not properly managed it leads to distractions, decreased focus on tasks, and reduced performance as employees become preoccupied with the conflict rather than their work. Persistent conflicts can create a negative work environment, leading to low morale and negatively impacting employee satisfaction which will eventually affect their job performance (Nwokedi, Osaheghe, Okereke & Gbenga, 2022) Hence, management has a responsibility to handle conflicts in an appropriately in order to improve organizational performance because doing so will lead to better time management, cooperation, and productivity (Shehu-Usman, Uzochukwu, Gambo & Abubaka, 2024).

Workers in various organization are organized into manageable groups in order to achieve common goals; therefore, the probability of workplace conflict arising is very high (Ongori, 2019). Workplace conflict is a process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affects, something that the first party cares about (Ekanem, 2025). Workplace conflict is inevitable in organizations. Conflict management can be either a positive or a negative force, not all workplace conflicts should be eliminated; some type or degree of workplace conflicts may prove beneficial.

Conflict management is constructive when it improves the quality of decisions, stimulates creativity and innovation, encourages interest and curiosity among organizational members, provides the medium through which problems can be aired and tensions released, and fosters an environment of self-evaluation and change. Conflict management challenges the status quo and therefore furthers the creation of new ideas, promotes reassessment of organizational goals and activities, and increases the probability that organization will respond to change. The destructive consequences of the organization may include reduction in organizational performance, retarded communication, reduced in-group cohesiveness and subordination of organizational goals to individual goals. In extreme cases, it can bring an organization to a halt and potentially threaten its survival (Shehu-Usman *et al.*, 2024).

Conflict management involves using expertise and techniques to resolve conflict within an organization. Conflict management pertains to the constructive handling and resolution of conflicts. (Awalluddin & Maznorbalia, 2023). Effective conflict management involves identifying the sources of the conflict, understanding the perspectives and needs of all parties involved, and working to find mutually beneficial solutions that address everyone's concerns (Andreoni & Chang, 2019). Therefore, road transport leaders are required to evolve appropriate strategies for effective conflict management to boost work performance level of employees. Lack of appropriate conflict management to influence employee satisfaction and desire to work makes attainment of the required standard a mirage. Therefore, it becomes imperative to take proactive measures in effectively managing conflicts to align with and achieve organizational objectives.

Organizational performance is a force that binds an individual to a course of action of relevant to one or more targets (Wonah, 2020). Committed employees stick to the object(s) of their performance. Employee is reflected in the attitude and behaviour of employer delegates. This also means that employers are only as good as their representative are; due to their pursuit of a particular goal. An employee performance is important because high level of performance lead to several favourable organizational outcomes.

The significance of conflict management strategies in organization is centered on how workplace conflict has been increasing, placing a high demand for dynamic strategies but

purposeful responsiveness on all stakeholders, which could be observed through varying proxies. These proxies are categorized into collective bargaining strategy and mediation strategy.

Collective bargaining strategy is focused on win-win situations. Collective bargaining strategy is the process in which employers and workers join in conference from time to time, and agree upon the terms of employment for workers (Shadara, 2019). Collective bargaining plays active role in the management of state-industrial and its role led to the resolution of the 2009 and 2011 state-wide strikes (Bello & Kinge, 2014). The word “collective bargaining” was not used until this century, the process itself extends far back in time.

Mediation strategy is often necessitated where the contending parties are unable to negotiate their needs and goals because of the emotions involved. In facilitating this strategy, a mediator attempts to help the disputants find a compromise, giving both conflicting parties equal opportunities for participation in solving the conflict (Siriwardana & Siriwardhana, 2025). Road transport leaders are required to evolve appropriate strategies for effective conflict management to boost work performance. Lack of appropriate conflict management to influence employee satisfaction and desire to work makes attainment of the required standard a mirage. Therefore, it becomes imperative to take proactive measures in effectively managing conflicts to align with and achieve organizational objectives.

### **Statement of the problem**

Organizational performance of road transport workers in Cross River State in the past years have witness deplorable state. Therefore, the researcher wants to find out if conflict management strategies affect organizational performance of road transport workers in Cross River State. Other researchers’ findings revealed that several factors impact on organizational performance of road transport workers in Cross River State. Regrettably, this impact has not been fully achieved because most road transport workers in Cross River State lack skills that are consistent with the demands of the organization. As a result of which most of them can hardly cope with their members, this is partly because some organizations are failing in providing adequate workplace conflict resolution mechanisms to equip staff and workers for today’s efficient performance.

It is arguable that conflict is an inherent part of any organization and such it may not be possible to eliminate it completely. It is therefore one of management’s major responsibilities to keep conflict intensity at the lowest disruptive level possible. In light of this, effective managers’ focus not eliminating conflict but on creating the right intensity so as to produce functional benefits from it.

However, it is not worthy that a number of factors are capable of affecting performance of organizations especially goal incompatibility and decision making. Goal incompatibility for instance generates conflict where there is a disagreement concerning the direction of organizational activity and the criteria for evaluating task accomplishment. If goals unit attainment by one unit as preventing other units from achieving their own goals, barriers to goals accomplishment arises. This is one of the most frequently identified sources of conflict in an organization.

Also, the particular process of decision-making used by each of the interacting unit, the degree of task uncertainty and availability of resources cause conflict where there is a struggle between units for limited resources needed to accomplish their goals. Performance of one group affects the subsequent performance of other groups. Other causes of conflict which affect performance in an organization may include reward structure, differences in perception, status incongruence, increased demand for specialist and different loyalties. It was on these premise that the researcher was motivated to examine the influence of conflict

management strategies on organizational performance of road transport workers in Cross River State.

### **Objectives of the study**

The main objective of the study was to determine the influence of conflict management strategies and organizational performance of road transport workers in Cross River State, Nigeria. The specific objectives include to:

- i. Examine the influence of collective bargaining strategy on organizational performance of road transport workers in Cross River State.
- ii. Determine the influence of mediation strategy on organizational performance of road transport workers in Cross River State.

### **Research questions**

The following research questions were posed to guide the study:

- i. To what extent does collective bargaining strategy influence organizational performance of road transport workers in Cross River State?
- ii. How does mediation strategy influence organizational performance of road transport workers in Cross River State?

### **Research hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses formed the bases of this study.

- i. Collective bargaining strategy has no significant influence on organizational performance of road transport workers in Cross River State.
- ii. Mediation strategy has no significant influence on organizational performance of road transport workers in Cross River State.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Collective bargaining strategy**

This strategy is focused on win-win situations. Collective bargaining strategy is the process in which employers and workers join in conference from time to time, and agree upon the terms of employment for workers (Shadara, 2019). While the word “collective bargaining” was not used until this century, the process itself extends far back in time. Current collective bargaining has a number of important characteristics. It is not a discrete event or a one-time bargain, but rather is a continuing, legal relationship.

High levels of cooperation and aggressiveness define this mode. By working together, teams and individuals can resolve the problem in a way that benefits all parties. The concerned parties work together to discover a solution that satisfactorily satisfies their respective issues (Imtiaz *et al.*, 2022; Effiong & Agbade, 2016; Agbade *et. al*, 2019; Olofu *et. al* 2024). It entails integrating ideas to find the best possible solutions in conflict situations. The best answer is achieved through a creative process that is spurred by the contributions of other parties concerned. (Umana, 2019; Agbor *et. al* 2026).

Collective bargaining has come of age, it has matured. One mark of maturity is the small number of strikes and the absence of violence. Collective bargaining strategy today works reasonably well when the subject concerns wages and working conditions between an employer and a group of workers. Collective bargaining does not work well in the case of a declining industry that needs relief, for example, railroads (Igyu *et. al* 2022, Obi *et. al* 2020; Adie *et. al* 2019; Adie *et. al* 2019; Adie *et. al* 2022). As prosperous industries automate, the issue of jobs comes front and center. Management cannot be expected to employ people no longer needed, and unions will find it difficult to concede that their members are superfluous. Where an industry tries to get unions to bargain their members out of a job and their union out of existence, it is easy to predict trouble. The collective bargaining process also has its

costs. The very success of the process in bettering working conditions makes it difficult to change these conditions as might be required to improve productivity. The impact of strikes on third parties, such as travelers on a shut-down airline, can be inconvenient and expensive. However, collective bargaining today works reasonably well.

Benjamin and Hideaki (2004) cited in Bello and Kinge (2014) noted that one of the purposes of collective bargaining is settling conflicts between employer and employees in order to achieve industrial harmony. To achieve this, certain techniques are necessary. In Cross River State, the methods include the following according to Bello and Kinge (2014): i. Preparation for negotiation ii. Bargaining demand iii. Breakdown of the collective bargaining iv. Changing position and reaching agreement.

Bello and Kinge (2014) conducted a study on collective bargaining as a strategy for industrial conflict management in Taraba State public service (2007-2011). The study adopted the primary and secondary sources of data. Simple descriptive analysis and percentages were used for the purpose of data analysis and chi-square was used to test hypothesis. The study revealed that collective bargaining plays active role in the management the state-industrial conflicts management in Taraba state and its role led to the resolution of the 2009 and 2011 state-wide strikes. The study recommended among others that Taraba state chapter of Nigerian Labour Congress should always prepare and endeavour to mobilize, sensitize or enlighten its members on matters affecting the unions as well as to use such medium to counter most of government propaganda in order to improve their role in collective bargaining.

### **Mediation strategy**

Mediation strategy has evolved as organizations recognize the need for proactive conflict resolution mechanisms. While traditional mediation focuses on resolving disputes post-conflict, facilitation emphasizes preemptive engagement to address tensions before they escalate. By employing facilitation as a mediation strategy, organizations can foster constructive dialogue, encourage collaboration, and enhance operational efficiency (Siriwardana & Siriwardhana, 2025; Olofu et. al 2024; Ushie et. al 2023; Olowonefa & Agbade, 2023; Agbade et. al, 2021). Mediation strategy is often necessitated where the contending parties are unable to negotiate their needs and goals because of the emotions involved. For instance, In the facilitating strategy, a mediator attempts to help the disputants find a compromise, giving both conflicting parties equal opportunities for participation in solving the conflict. The pressing strategy describes a mediator's behavior as criticizing the conflicting parties and making them do what a mediator wants them to do. In the neutral strategy, a mediator does not take part in a conflict process but mainly performs the role of an observer. Brenninkmeijer (2009) cited in Siriwardana and Siriwardhana, (2025) defined mediation as a form of intervening in conflicts in which a neutral independent expert guides the communication and negotiations between the parties to reach agreements about desired behaviors and solutions, both based on the parties' interests. Mediators should show the parties that they have no interest in favoring one party over another.

Mediation describes an intervention in a negotiation or workplace conflict by a mutually acceptable third party who does not have a definitive decision-making power over the disputants, but whose effort assists both parties in arriving at a mutually acceptable settlement of issues in their dispute (Siriwardana & Siriwardhana, 2025; Antai et. al 2025; Agbade et. al, 2019; Bessong et. al 2025; Patrick et. al 2026; Usua et. al 2023). Mediation seeks to achieve an acceptable settlement for parties in a workplace conflict through non-violent means. A mediator plays several roles in a workplace conflict including; leadership; opening channels of communication legitimizing the rights and interests of the disputants; facilitator of negotiations; problem analyzer; agent of reality; and, scapegoat. Mediators fall

into three broad categories: Independent mediator, social network mediator and authoritative mediator.

Siriwardana and Siriwardhana (2025) conducted a study on the effectiveness of mediation strategies, including facilitation, in resolving inter-group conflicts within organizations and their impact on productivity in the Sri Lankan apparel industry. The study employs qualitative research design, utilizing semi-structured interviews, Key Informant Interviews (KII), and Focused Group Discussions (FGD) to capture diverse perspectives and experiences. The sampling strategy encompasses three organizational levels, including HR managers, supervisors, and grassroots-level employees from the apparel industry in the Western Province. The data collection methods include semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, particularly supervisors from identified sections, to explore the nuanced experiences, perspectives, and emotions surrounding inter-group conflicts within an organizational context. Key Informant Interviews (KII) are conducted with HR managers to extract comprehensive insights into organizational policies and existing mechanisms for conflict resolution. Focused group discussions tap into collective perspectives, experiences, and opinions concerning inter-group conflicts within the organization (Effiong & Agbade, 2018; Ogunode et. al 2024; Olofu, & Hur-Yagba, 2019). Thematic analysis is applied to qualitative data, revealing patterns and insights from interviews, focus group discussions, and Key Information Interviews (KII). Organizational productivity reports and annual reports are scrutinized to objectively assess changes in productivity resulting from mediation and other conflict resolution strategies. The conclusion reflects on the broader significance of the study, addressing its limitations and proposing avenues for future research. Ultimately, the study reinforces the transformative potential of mediation in shaping harmonious organizational ecosystems and fostering enduring productivity.

### **Organizational performance**

Organizational performance stands as the ultimate benchmark for success. Achieving and sustaining optimal organizational performance is a complex endeavour influenced by various internal and external factors. From leadership strategies to organizational operational efficiency, a well performing organization is a testament to effective management across diverse front (Wonah, 2020; Olofu & Patrick, 2019; Opara et. al 2020; Agbade et. al, 2019; 2022). Altaweel and Alhawary (2021) assert that researchers widely acknowledge the significance of organizational performance as a key managerial concept. This concept delves into the organization's capacity to realize its predetermined goals by skillfully and efficiently leveraging the spectrum of available resources (Cho & Ibrahim, 2021). It involves a detailed assessment of the organization's effectiveness in strategic thinking, planning, and resource utilization to bring about the desired results. Essentially, organizational performance functions as a comprehensive gauge, reflecting the overall effectiveness and efficiency with which an organization operates to accomplish its objectives (Ofobruku 2022; Cho & Ibrahim, 2021; Ibu et. al 2019; Ibu et. al 2019).

Organizational performance encompasses a variety of activities that support the establishment of the organization's goals and track its progress towards them. It is employed to make modifications in order to achieve objectives more successfully and efficiently (Chandrasekar, 2011; Olofu & Ugbe, 2021; Patrick et. al 2025; Agbade et. al, 2020). Any organization that wants to succeed needs to have its functions defined and completed.

Effective performance which relates to emotional attachment is normally linked to a favourable working environment and relationships with other workers. Normative performance, on the other hand is related to obligation; workers may feel they owe the organization for being given a job. Finally, continuance performance relates to such terms of employment as job contracts, which may make leaving the current job very costly or

troublesome (Ardianto, 2020). It must be stressed that work performance and turnover owing to organizational environment have become a major headache to many heads of organization in general, and human resource manager in particular (Winardi, Prentice & Weaven, 2022). This problem is mostly attributable to lack of stability and job security for workers who constitute one of the most important resources in the organization. Many organizations have begun to foster workers' performance to their work/occupation/career to the organization, its values and ambitions; and to a strong job ethics.

Organization performance is positively related to such desirable outcomes as motivation and attendance and is negatively related to outcome as absenteeism and turnover (Mmbwang, Moare & Were, 2021). Committed employee has been found to be more creative and less likely to leave an organization than those who are uncommitted (Mmbwang *et al.*, 2021). Arikpo (2025) stresses that sustained productivity improvement depends on the enterprises of human capital (the skills, knowledge, competences and attitude that resides in the individual employee of the enterprise) and its social capital. A committed employee is perceived to be one who stays with the organization even in turbulent times, attends work regularly, protects company's asset and shares company's goal. Therefore, it is evident that for sustained productivity, employee performance is an important factor.

Workers' performance is beneficial to both employers and workers (Arikpo, 2021; Meremikwu *et. al* 2022). For individual workers, work performance signifies a positive relationship with organization and attaches more meaning to life, whereas for employers, committed workers are likely to enhance the service reduce turnover and reduce cause of absenteeism. Employee performance has also been associated with efficiency, productivity, creativity and innovativeness among workers (Min *et al.*, 2020; Olofu & Ugbe, 2021; Patrick *et. al* 2025; Agbade *et. al*, 2020).

### **Methodology**

Survey research design was adopted for the study. The design is preferred because it enables the researcher to objectively collect data concerning the variables as they exist at the same time of investigation. The population of the study comprised 206 management and staff of road transport workers in Cross River State. The road transport workers were considered as they also contribute to the conflict management strategies. Census was adopted for the study. Data were sourced from both primary and secondary sources. A questionnaire was administered to obtain primary data. Secondary sources of data were used as the main source of data collection to gather relevant information from published materials, articles, libraries and journals.

The major instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire titled "Conflict Management Strategies and Organizational Performance of Road Transport Workers Questionnaire (CMSOPRTWQ) based on 4 points rating scale. The instrument was validated by three experts: two from the Department of Business Management and one from the Department of Accounting in University of Calabar. The reliability of the instrument was established based on a pilot study that was conducted using the test-retest method carried out on employees of road transport workers in Cross River State. To determine the reliability of the instrument, a pilot tests was conducted using 39 employees in road transport workers. Data analysis was done by the use of tables. Simple Linear Regression was used to test the hypotheses of the study.

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## **Results**

### **Hypothesis 1**

Collective bargaining strategy has no significant influence on organizational performance of road transport workers in Cross River State. To test this hypothesis, simple linear regression was computed using the data collected. The computation is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Summary of Linear regression analysis on the influence of collective bargaining strategy on organizational performance

Source of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	P-Level
Regression	22.590	1	22.590	4.300	000
Residual	1040.130	198	5.253		
Total	1062.720	199			

The data displayed on Table 1 shows the summary of simple linear regression analysis on the influence of collective bargaining strategy on organizational performance. The result displayed on Table 4 showed that the analysis of variance in the regression output produced an F-ratio of 4.300 which is statistically significant at 0.05 probability level. On the basis of this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that collective bargaining strategy has high significant influence on organizational performance.

### **Hypothesis 2**

Mediation strategy has no significant influence on organizational performance of road transport workers in Cross River State. To test hypothesis 2, simple linear regression was computed using the data collected. The computation is shown in table 2.

**Table 2:** Summary of linear regression analysis on the influence of mediation strategy on organizational performance

Source of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	P-Level
Regression	16.784	1	16.784	3.177	000
Residual	1045.936	198	5.283		
Total	1062.720	199			

The data displayed on Table 2 shows the summary of simple linear regression analysis on the influence of mediation strategy on organizational performance. The result displayed showed that the analysis of variance in the regression output produced an F-ratio of 3.177 which is statistically significant at 0.05 probability level. On the basis of this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that mediation strategy has high significant influence on organizational performance.

### Discussion of findings

#### Collective bargaining strategy and organizational performance of road transport workers

The correlation analysis revealed a positive and significant influence on collective bargaining strategy and organizational performance of road transport workers in Cross River State. This finding is congruent with the position of Bello and Kinge (2014) who conducted a study on collective bargaining as a strategy for industrial conflict management in Taraba State public service (2007-2011). The study adopted the primary and secondary sources of data. Simple descriptive analysis and percentages were used for the purpose of data analysis and chi-square was used to test hypothesis. The study revealed that collective bargaining plays active role in the management the state industrial conflicts management in Taraba state. The study recommended among others that the state government should cooperate with the chapter in order to improve the contribution of the union in conflicts resolution and management in the state

#### Mediation strategy and organizational performance of road transport workers

Hypothesis two examined how mediation strategy influences organizational performance of road transport workers in Cross River State. In relation to this study, this finding correlate with Siriwardana and Siriwardhana (2025) who conducted a study on the effectiveness of mediation strategies, including facilitation, in resolving inter-group conflicts within organizations and their impact on productivity in the Sri Lankan apparel industry. The study employs qualitative research design, utilizing semi-structured interviews, Key Informant Interviews (KII), and Focused Group Discussions (FGD) to capture diverse perspectives and experiences. The sampling strategy encompasses three organizational levels, including HR managers, supervisors, and grassroots-level employees from the apparel industry in the Western Province. The data collection methods include semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, particularly supervisors from identified sections, to explore the nuanced experiences, perspectives, and emotions surrounding inter-group conflicts within an organizational context. Focused group discussions tap into collective perspectives, experiences, and opinions concerning inter-group conflicts within the organization.

## Conclusion

The findings in this study showed that conflict management strategies on organizational performance of road transport workers in Cross River State, Nigeria is best achieved through collective bargaining strategy, mediation strategy and arbitration strategy. Findings suggest that collective bargaining strategy, mediation strategy and arbitration strategy have significant influence on organizational performance. It was observed in the course of this study that the existence of conflict in the management of any organization is inevitable.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. That three partners (government, employers and employees) should imbibe good morality in their dealing to achieve collective bargaining. Hence, collective bargaining is one of the ways to provide good conflict resolution and meaningful development in a country.
2. That road transport organizations should focus on increasing the utilization of conflict management strategies like mediation strategy to increase organizational performance.

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