

INVESTIGATING THE USE OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES TO ENHANCE THE PERFORMANCE OF SMALL BUSINESSES IN BORNO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the use of Conflict Management Techniques by small business operators in Borno State, Nigeria. The techniques investigated includes Investigation, Arbitration, Dialogue, Enforcement, Work Environment, Diversity Management, Collaboration and, Learning Adventure, which constituted the study Independent Variables; and the Dependent variable is the effective conflict management by the operators of registered small-businesses in the state. The scope of the study focused on the registered small business operators within the major business hubs in 4 local governments Areas in the state, which include MMC, Jere, Konduga and Mafa with a documented population of seven thousand eight hundred and fifty (7850) registered small-businesses. The target population includes the 2 categories of the operators of the registered small businesses (owners and their operating staff). It used a multistage sampling technique, which comprises of cluster, purposive and simple random sampling to arrive at a sample of four hundred and fifty-four (454) respondents of the study. The study employed descriptive research design which involved modified qualitative data using well-structured questionnaire. The interview instrument was used only for screening guide to sample respondents with fair knowledge of the subject to report on the usage of the identified techniques from the available literature. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics with frequency and percentage distribution, mean distribution and bar charts. This study found all the eight techniques investigated to be in use by small-business operators for managing conflicts of small business concern in the state. This study recommends that small-business operators should utilise a combination of relevant techniques; as no single technique can effectively resolve business conflict. Operators should attend routine symposiums and training workshops to gain greater awareness on the use of appropriate techniques in managing small business conflicts in the state. It also recommended the need to replicate this study in other states of the country to add value to the current state of knowledge on this subject.

Keywords: Conflict management, Conflict techniques, Small-business performance, Borno State, Nigeria.

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Introduction

Conflict is the expression of perceived differences in the opinions of people, groups, organisations, states or nations. It expresses the occurrences of divergent opinions in the mindset of the people in a social setting. Divergences in social phenomenon could assume different dimensions at given time or the other. In conflict situations, the means of livelihood (businesses) of the people are affected in a way or the other. Therefore, conflict management is a human necessity that requires concerted effort in managing it. There are many conflict management techniques available to small business operators and the choice of a technique or combination of techniques largely depends on the scope of knowledge, skills, experience and the environment of the conflicts. The focal point of this paper is to investigate whether or not the commonly reported conflict management techniques in the available literature are being utilised by small business operators in the central axis of the Borno state, Nigeria.

In the last two (2) decades, small businesses in Borno State, particularly those in the central axis faced multidimensional conflicts arising from the advent of insurgency, terrorism and counter terrorism, causing serial destabilisation of the business activities in the study area this is a huge motivation for this paper. Further insights in the available literature indicated that the techniques used for managing small-business conflict in Nigeria and Borno state in particular has not received considerable research attention. This study searching for evidence reveals existence of varied empirical findings in conflict management literature attributed to the studies of Shehu-Usman, Uzochukwu, Gambo and Abubakar (2024), Samrah, Seemab, Mahira, Huma and Muhammad (2022), Francis, Enyinna and Uju (2021), Yetunde, et al. (2021), Ford (2021); Yetunde, Igbino and Adejumo (2021), Hasim, Dahlan and Iriawan (2021), Tariq and Rehman (2020), Chika, Akintokunbo, Odunayo and John-Eke (2020), Makhshvili (2019), Hotepo (2019), Ajike, Akinlabi, Magaji and Sonubi (2015). However, none of these recent studies in the available literature reported the subject matter in Nigeria and Borno State in particular. Thus, existence of empirical and location gaps was found in the available literature to warrant the need for this research.

To fill these research gaps, therefore, this study investigates the extent to which the identified Conflict Management Techniques in the available literature were in use by the small business operators in the study area. In this wise, this research posed a research questions that, what are the conflict management techniques used to enhance performance by the small-business operators in Borno State, Nigeria?

Literature Review

This section deals with the conceptual issues which includes meaning of conflict, conflict-management techniques, empirical review, theoretical-framework and research model was examined.

Conflicts Management

Conflict is a struggle from active disagreement in opinions and/or interests of people or group. According to Patel (2023), conflict is the product of human interaction; be it in

workplaces, business places, in the neighbourhood or community of diverse interests. Literature are unanimous that the most common reasons conflict occurs in workplaces or societies are different personalities, perspectives; unresolved aspect of past conflicts; competitive drive amongst parties; poor communication; and, conflicting roles or responsibilities as the main causes of conflict (Herrity, 2023). Thus, conflict situations are by-products of human interactions, which require conflict-management techniques.

In a small business setup, there are several reasons that leads to conflict between business owners, coworkers, and customers. wherever it does happen, it is essential to resolve it before it gets out of hands. Therefore, it is important to understand how to manage or resolve conflict of varied types or nature. AbdulFattah and Al-Mamary (2020) add that it's necessary for business managers to determine the type of conflict they faced and how to handle it. Indeed, conflicts can be classified in terms of levels, directions, structure and design. On this note, AbdulFattah and Al-Mamary (2020) categorised conflicts as intrapersonal conflict, interpersonal conflict, intragroup conflict, intergroup conflict, intra-organisational conflict, and inter-organisational conflicts.

Conflict management is a response to and the resolution of conflict in any form or stage. Indeed, it require diverse conflict resolution techniques. Herrity (2023) affirms that conflict resolution or management requires bringing understanding amongst opposing parties; as such to find a solution over the cause of disagreement, which reasonably leaves everyone satisfied and accommodative. Conflict management involves persons who are neutral party or mediator to the conflict. It might involve outside perspective to find a solution. It must be noted that not all conflicts can actually be resolved to the satisfaction of all the parties involved. On this note therefore, Hotepo (2019) argues that conflict management do not necessarily infer avoidance, decreasing nor eliminating incidence of conflicts, but, devising effective techniques to minimise its consequences in other to enhance performance in organisations.

The ability to resolve conflicts rest on the leadership trait of the people who are capable of identifying conflict situations, parties involved, admit divergency in views and build consensus for mutual understanding and harmonious relationship in organisations. Effective leadership makes it most likely for people to set aside their differences, individually or collectively and to work in a continued harmony. Out of all the disputes,, the best way to manage them is by negotiation among the parties. Furthermore, the most common of the negotiation strategy, is the use of 'Thomas-Kilmann' model, which is consistent with the Herrity's (2023) five (5) approaches to conflict management.

Conflict Management Techniques

The debate on what constitutes conflict management techniques is an on-going concern. On the first note, most of the Conflict-management techniques are a mediation effort, which aims at creating understanding to end disagreements. Confrontation ibvove the use of forceful means to address the cause of conflict and push the ways of solving it (Unwin, 2021; Makhashvili, 2019). According to Bature (2019), the performance of business activities largely depends on the relative peace in the business environment.

Any strategy that yields conducive business environment cannot be underestimated but be the right step in the right direction. According to Panda (2020), in every organisation there is the likelihood for the occurrence of conflict among individuals or groups relative to the type of industry, operating environment and social settings.

The practice enduring, avoiding or eliminating conflict situations is the domain of conflict management techniques to mitigate conflict situations in organizational settings (Oladimeji & Sowemimo, 2020; Nyamori, 2019). Such instances of conflict might reflect interests that contravene the effective discharge of responsibilities in a manner that undermine business trust, confidence and the integrity required in business operating environment (Mustapha & Momoh, 2022). Moreover, Panda (2020) outlines the most widely used strategy for managing conflicts in order towards achieving industrial harmony amongst business operators. The strategy includes Investigation, Dialogue, 'Arbitration, Enforcement, Working-environment, Managing diversity, Collaboration and Learning-adventure. Discussion on each of these techniques is presented in the subsequent section.

The strategy used in handling conflicts amongst small businesses are limitless but dynamic. Nevertheless, a peacebuilding processes towards industrial harmony is sacrosanct for effective impenetation of performance objectives; as such, operators of small businesses can adopt any or combination of the following CMT:

Investigation: this strategy otherwise known 'inquiry' involve the process of finding facts on vital business information for business decisions and actions (Panda, 2020). Small business operators could shop for business information by inquiry on the happenings within and outside the operating climate. Such inquiry might on issues relative to the economic conditions, actions or strategy of rival companies, etc.

Dialogue: otherwise known as peace-talk in manners that relate to how conflicts might be resolved in workplaces (Unwin, 2021). It is critical to maintains cordility amongst business operators by negotiating their diverse interests, be it personal or groups' interest as maybe connected to divergent business endeavours. Indeed, various parties in conflict situations should adopt dialogue strategy for negotiating divergent viewpoints in order to inculcate teamspirit within business premises. Conflicts resolution via dialogue entail spirit of give-and-take amongst conflicting parties, towards unanimous or common business decisions. Panda (2020) contends that peacetalk is an effective means of conflicts resolution, particularly at early stage of disagreements operators in business arena.

Arbitration: interests conflict can be resolved using arbitration panel to review and resolve all conflict of interest amongst individuals or groups within the same business premises. Unwin, (2021) advocates the use of an advanced peace process like the panel of arbitrators resolve industrial conflict amongst individuals or groups in workplaces. The arbitration panel is a dispute resolution that presume state of industrial-court with resolutions that are legally biding on all parties in conflict workplaces (Panda, 2020). In

arbitration, according to Hill-Grey, Reio Jr and Rocco (2020), the parties cannot unilaterally withdraw from arbitration once the process is ongoing. Here, the parties in dispute have to agree in referring the case in contention to the panel of arbitration with a documented agreement.

Enforcement: This is a conflict handling process whereas business operators resort to the use of force in addressing conflict matters (Oden, 2020). Enforcement in CMT resorts to actions like operative sanctions, structural reorganisation, loss or gain of positions in a manner to bring in and sustain industrial harmony for operating performance in organisations. Enforcement in CMT involves synchronisation of combined efforts of business operators towards the attainment of social stabilities to forestall chaos in the operating environments (Unwin, 2021).

Working-environment: CMT to enhance small business performance must address the conditions of operating rooms as such to ensure its conduciveness for effective service delivery. Conducive condition of service requires provision of functional materials, financial/operation disciplines, updating tax-records, and workplace decency that are consistent with performance objectives. Hence, Oden (2020) contends that established work environments increase the operators' confidence in workplaces. Adding to the foregoing, Panda (2020) argues that operators should demand for a secure and conducive condition of service in the workplaces. A good working condition guarantees long-lasting workplace harmony (Oden, 2020). It is equally imperative means of building good-wills for the business and operators' personalities. Notably, Ford, (2021) opines that interest conflicts can be provisionally handled in diversified work environments for all-inclusive and equitable flow of information and the distribution of business resources.

Managing Diversity: diversity in human nature in the form of nationality, gender, ethnicity, religious, race, age, physical ability, socioeconomic and political ideology, and life experiences that represents varied identities, similarities, value orientations and perspectives (CMU, 2022; Ford, 2021).

Collaboration: in CMT for small businesses encompasses the basic requirements for 'inclusion', 'equity', 'fairness to all parties in business ecosystem. These tripod concepts are components of collaborative engagement in conflict resolution. The tripod concepts are interwoven with little or no tick barrier amongst them. In *Equity*, justice, equality of purpose and a levelled playing ground are given to every operator in business concern (Pyrford, 2019). Similarly, in *Fairness*, business operators are expected to be kind to one another as seek equal opportunities for growth, dignity, respect, development, resources accessibility and information. Thus, eliminating barriers for greater participation, involvement and collaboration to achieve planned objectives (Ford, 2021; CMU, 2022). Lastly, *Inclusion* is said to be the binding philosophy for effective communication, to enhance good sense of belonging that create participation and free flow of contributions in all aspect of business activities (Ford, 2021).

Learning Adventure: here business operators engage in observations, critical review of business events to learn the business skills necessary to cope with business requirement relative to intelligent others. Learning adventure prepares business operators for effective performance of business objectives. CMU, (2022) contends that learning adventure help business operator to bridge the gap(s) in business knowledge, skills and expertise as such to minimise risks and instance of interest conflict. More so, learning adventure enhance unique competency in the implementation planned business activities for effective performance.

Conflict Management Strategy and Small Businesses Operators

Conflicts in small businesses takes multiple dimensions; starting with the sources of conflicts, be it internal or intra business conflicts, external or inter business conflicts and foreign agencies induce business conflicts. Small business managers need to evaluate the level of implementation at interval of time to know whether the disputes are resolve or not, and also, to know if the method used is cost effective. Conflicts evaluation help managers to know whether there is improved relationship among the operators in the business premises. Furthermore, Coursera (2023) adds that managers take two (2) vital techniques of conflict management, which includes ‘cooperation’ and ‘assertiveness’; therefrom, five (5) conflict management techniques emerged. The five (5) techniques listed here include accommodating, avoiding, collaborating, competing and compromising:

The conflict management strategy helps in resolving incidence of discrepancies over operators’ interests and to appreciate the interests of the rival party. The approach is highly beneficial to business operators because it reduces conflict situation to minor issue that can easily be addressed. Coursera (2023) warned that a suitable conflict management strategy like avoidance or accommodative techniques are suitable to minor conflicts, but complex conflict situation requires more assertive techniques. Batool and Hayat (2019) tip collaborative technique as strategy that help individuals or groups to effectively work together with others to attain business goals. This strategy is applicable in managing business related conflicts, which involve proper coordination, cooperation, and information sharing among operators in various group to achieve performance objectives. Collaborative strategy works best where the participants are at the same decision level with sufficient time to deliberate the issues in conflict (Rogers et al., 2018). The strategy is the opposite of accommodating strategy that is more of assertive than cooperation. This strategy is sometimes used where small business operator has more influential position than other operators for quick resolution of conflict (Coursera, 2023).

Collaborating technique settles the conflict by using a strategy that is advantageous to both parties in dispute, increasing the likelihood that they will address common concerns, share viewpoints, and pay attention to others' recommendations, leading to a more effective solution and reduce cost and processing time and thus gaining greater efficiency (Wang et al., 2020). However, this conflict management strategy is not

effective in resolving disputes in the long run because some SB operators may not be satisfied or willing to shift ground.

Theoretical Framework

This study reviewed some functional theories that adequately support effective performance of the small business enterprises. The study search light founds the Normative Realist Theory (NRT) propounded by Gilbert Harman in 1996 as capable in predicating performance objectives of the business ventures. Hence, Hill-Grey (2020) opines that the theory proved that cultural differences influence business behaviours that are consistent with performance-objectives in workplaces. That means, effective conflict management techniques help stimulate workplace behaviours and/or business performance; as evident in these contemporary researches (Park, 2019; McPherson, 2019; Laskowski, 2019; Tiefensee, 2019; Clarke-Doane, 2020; Golub, 2021). It should be noted that stakeholders' behaviour relative to perceived conflicts and management options in resolving them matters in the effective implementations of planned objectives in businesses. This signifies the shared-value or belief-system of key business operators on the manners in which they handle conflicts relative to the performance objectives.

The composition of this study population necessitates the adoption of conceptual lineage of the NRT to underpins the effective implementation of the study's core objectives. Indeed, the NRT provide the theoretical support in the selection of this study variables i.e., the Independent-Variable (IV) and the Dependent-Variable (DV). This theoretical underpins is reflected in the design and conceptualisation of the study's research-model as shown in the figure 1 overleaf. The research model and its measurability in figure 1, help to visualised the interrelationship and inter-dependencies of the proxies IV and DV of the study respectively.

Presented in figure 1 is the study's research model indicating the relationship between the IV, which is the Conflict Management Techniques with eight (8) proxies, including *Dialogue*, *Arbitration*, *Enforcement*, *Managing Diversity*, *Working Environment*, *Collaboration*, and *Learning Adventure* that are the key determinants of conflicts Small-businesses performance (i.e. the DV). In

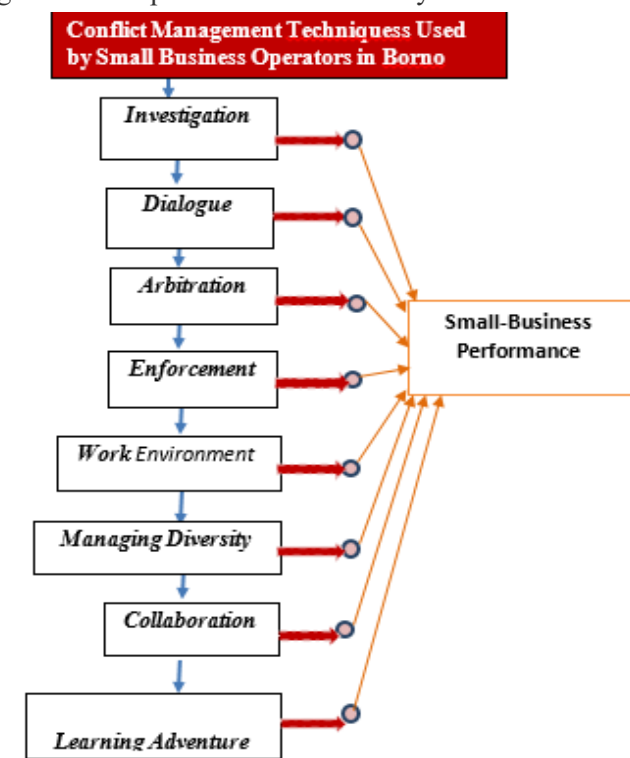


Figure 1: Research Model

tunes with the ideologies of the NRT, the IV influence the DV, whilst SFT explains the diversity of the dual perspectives of the respondents, which include the business owners and the operating staff. The measurability is viewed from the perspective of many-to-one data relationship pattern.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive research survey design with a population of all the registered small businesses in the clustered areas of Borno State in Nigeria with a documented figure of seven thousand eight hundred and fifty (7850, Gulani, Abdullahi & Kyari, 2022). The target population comprises of all the 2 sets of the operators of the registered small businesses, in this study area. The operators are categorised as ‘business owners’ and ‘operating staff’ who were employed to help in the day-day running of the businesses.

Thus, the study used multistage sampling techniques comprises of cluster, stratified, purposive and random sampling techniques in the conduct of this survey. The ‘cluster-technique’ was used to select 4 out of the 27 local government areas in the state. ‘stratified-technique’ was used to categorised the population into the proprietors (owners) and the operating staff (employee) groups respectively. Similarly, the ‘purposive-technique’ was used judgmentally to select 227 respondents who will report the happening on the subject matter from each stratum of the study population; and, the ‘simple-random-technique’ was used in the distribution of the study questionnaire with interview guide. The justification for choosing equal sampled respondents from each stratum rest on the need to take precautions to avoid scenario where the opinions of the dominant (staffers) group overwhelms the final-result of the survey.

Table 1: Sample Frame

Population (Registered Businesses)	Business Owners	Operating Staff	Total Sampled Respondents
7850	227	227	454

Source: Survey4Kash’ Sample-size Calculator (Larry, 2021).

The data for this study was obtained from the use of questionnaire instrument, which was administered to the respondents. A total of four hundred and fifty-four (454) copies of the study questionnaire was distributed with the interview guide to ensure only those with fair knowledge of the topic were chosen to fill the instrument. This is done to minimise wastage of materials and cost of data retrieval.

The field exercises took place within two (2) weeks from the commencement to completion. The tedious nature of the field exercise coupled with the measure to ensure wider coverage of the study area; the service of 2 indigent Research Assistants was employed. The research assistants were well briefed on how to handle the administration of the questionnaire instruments while collecting the data for the analysis. The design of the questionnaire instrument was conceived on the premise of three (3) points Likert scale. The measuring scale includes point one (1), which is

either 'Disagree' (D) or 'Ineffective' (E); the point two (2) is 'Neutral' (N); whilst the point three (3) is either 'Agree' (A); or 'Effective' (E). The Neural was added to eliminate cases of respondents' indifference in choosing either of the two options in the categorical survey. where each measuring categorisation as the case maybe, is aligned with the study objective.

The questionnaire instrument was subjected to a pilot-test in key business locations along Baga road, Open Air-theatre and Milk shops; whereby 50 random respondents were surveyed on the subject matter and their responses used in reliability and validity-tests in order to eliminate the likelihood of design errors in the questionnaire instrument. Thus, reliability and validity tests result stood at 0.813, representing 81.3% response rate that is higher than the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.70 minimum benchmark. This value is consistent with Gulani, et al. (2022) as evidence of the facts that the questionnaire instrument was well tailored for the field survey.

The statistical tool used for data analysis was descriptive statistics which include cross-tabulation, percentage distributions and, graphical charts. The information used herein largely depends on the econometric analytical facts retrieved on all the coefficients of the key variables (i.e., dependent & independent) from the SPSS Model, version 22. The model Specifications for Descriptive Statistics of the identified CMT in used by SB operators in the study area. Thus, the use of 'Descriptive statistics' was employed to summarise, organise, present data and interpret it without making inferences about the population (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2022). In this wise, numerical and categorical data were collected, organised and summarised in two complementary ways; tables of frequency and percentage distributions, indicating how often values occur and their relative proportions and Bar charts to visualise the incidences. More so, numerical summaries such as measures of central tendency (mean & range) provide concise summaries of the reported dataset (Field, 2021).

Thus, the researchers observe patterns of data distributions and variability to draw insights and providing a clear and interpretable snapshot of the dataset and the foundation for further analysis (Cohen et al., 2018).

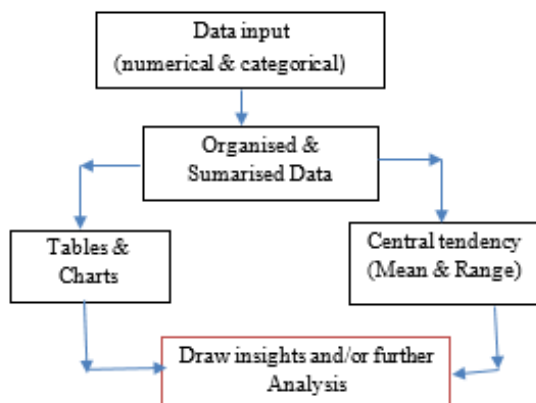


Figure 2: *Model of Descriptive Statistics*
Source: Adapted from Field (2021)

Data Presentation and Analysis

This chapter presents all data collected from the field survey exercise, which took place within the concentrated business axis in Borno State, Nigeria. The surveyed data are in three (3) categories, which includes biodata of the respondents; topical data for the independent variables (CMT); and topical data for the dependent variable (Small-business Performance).

Bio-Data

Table 2: Statistics of Bio-Data Distributions of Small Business Operators

Observed	Sampled Registered Businesses		Respondent's Sex		Age Group		Year in Business	
N	Owners	Staff	M	F	<30	30>	<10	10>
454	227	227	314	140	87	367	134	320

Source: Field Data, 2024

The Table 2, presents the Bio-data distributions of the small business operators in central business hub of Borno State in Borno State, Nigeria. The total observed was four hundred and fifty-four (454) respondents in each data group i.e. respondent's sex, age group, years in business, and business operators. A total of five hundred (500) copies of questionnaires were distributed of which 454 copies was retrieved valid for this analysis. The addition of forty-six (46) copies was made to account for 10% error terms in data collection processes.

The small businesses in the study area is male dominated with a total of three hundred and fourteen (314), which represents 69% of the business operators; whilst a total of one hundred and forty (140) representing 31% are the female population in the business arena. The small businesses sector in the area is largely dominated by operators within the age bracket of 30 and above, totalling three hundred and sixty-seven (367), which represents over 80% of the business operators in the area.

It is clear that the registered small businesses in the area are largely dominated by experience operators with the years in business of ten and above (10+) years, which represents about 70% of the business operators in the sampled space. This means the small business operators' experience can be relied upon in this surveyed data for this analysis.

CMT proxies (Operational Variables) in Use - Data

This subsection presents data on the CMT proxies in use with respect to the opinions of the sampled small-business operators in the study area. Table 3 presents data on the opinions of the sampled small business operators on this subject.

Table 3: Statistical Data of CMT Usage by Small Business Operators

Observed N	Investigation	Dialogue	Arbitration	Enforcement	Work Environment	Diversity Management	Collaboration	Learning Adventure
Disagree	230	15	232	27	30	120	285	24
Neutral	24	6	27	12	12	18	27	10
Agree	200	433	195	415	412	316	142	420
Total	454	454	454	454	454	454	454	454

Source: Field Data, 2024

This section presents data on the CMT operational identity to confirm whether or not each of the listed proxies are in use with respect to the opinions of the sampled small-business operators in the study area. It can be seen from the Table 3, two hundred and thirty (230) respondents who disagreed with the use of Investigation strategy in managing conflicts by the sampled small business operators in the study area. However, two hundred (200) reasoned otherwise, whilst twenty-four (24) opined neutral. On the Dialogue column, four hundred and thirty-three (433) of the sample respondents 'agreed', six (6) tagged 'neutral' and fifteen (15) however disagreed to the widely use of the dialogue proxy in CMT by the small business operators in the sector.

Similarly, two hundred and thirty-two (232) respondents disagreed with the use of Arbitration strategy in managing conflicts by the sampled small business operators in the study area; whilst, one hundred and ninety-five (195) tagged agreed, and twenty-seven (27) opined neutral as indicated in the Table 3. The 'Enforcement' statistics indicated a widely used proxy of CMT with the voice of the four hundred and fifteen (415) respondents in the 'agreed' column; whilst twenty-seven (27) and twelve (12) opined 'Disagreed' and Neutral respectively.

More so, the Table 3 displays the statistical data of "Work environment" proxy of CMT, whereas four hundred and twelve (412) respondents agreed to the widely use of this strategy in managing conflicts by the sampled small business operators in the study area. On the contrary, twelve (12) tagged 'Neutral', whilst thirty (30) opted for 'Disagreed' opinion. On the Diversity Management column, three hundred and sixteen (316) of the sample respondents on the 'Agreed' column, ten (10) tagged 'neutral' and fifteen (15) however disagreed to the widely use of the Diversity Management proxy in CMT by the small business operators in the sector.

Furthermore, two hundred and eighty-five (285) sampled operators disagreed with the use of Collaboration strategy in managing conflicts by the sampled small businesses in the study area; while, one hundred and forty-two (142) tagged agreed, and twenty-seven (27) opined neutral as indicated in the Table 3. The 'Learning adventure' statistics is indicated as a widely used proxy of CMT going by the opinions of four hundred and twenty (420) respondents in the 'Agreed' column; whilst twenty-four (24) and ten (10) opined 'Disagreed' and Neutral respectively.

Indeed, data captured for all the CMT proxies in Table 3 distribution indicated the identities of CMT proxies in use. These data shall be subjected to descriptive and inferential statistics in the succeeding section.

Small-Businesses' Performance Data

Table 4 displays the data on all the proxies of CMT with respect to the opinions of the sampled small business operators in the study area.

Table 4: Small Businesses Performance Data

Observed N	Investigation	Dialogue	Arbitration	Enforcement	Work Environment	Diversity Management	Collaboration	Learning Adventure
Low	190	155	161	231	126	126	139	167
High	264	299	293	223	328	328	315	287
Total	454	454	454	454	454	454	454	454

Source: Field Data, 2024

Table 4 displays the data distribution on the performance of small businesses in central business hub of Borno State of Borno State with respect to conflict management techniques. Starting with the statistics of ‘Investigation’ strategy shown in Table 4; it reveals that two hundred and sixty-four (264) respondents opined high performance of the sampled small businesses in the area. On the other hand, one hundred and ninety (190) reported low performance in this regard. On a similar note, the statistics of the ‘Dialogue’ column displayed in Table 4, shows that two hundred and ninety-nine (299) respondents see dialogue strategy in managing conflicts as high in the performance of small business; whilst one hundred and fifty-five of the sampled operators in the study area tagged ‘low’ performance for the dialogue proxy. Furthermore, the statistics on the Arbitration column shows that two hundred and ninety-three (293) sampled respondents ticked ‘high’ performance, as against one hundred and sixty-one (161) who tagged low performance of small businesses in the study area.

Table 4 also reveals that the ‘Enforcement’ statistics yield low small businesses’ performance, as indicated by two hundred and thirty-one (231), as against two hundred and twenty-three (223) respondents who considered high performance for this subject. Furthermore, Table 4 shows that ‘Work environment’ and ‘Diversity management’ proxies of CMT are high on small business performance with the three hundred and twenty-four (324) respondents vetting on the ‘High’ column, whilst one hundred and twenty-six (126) tagged ‘Low performance’ for duo proxies respectively. Similarly, in Table 4, the ‘Collaboration’ column shows that, three hundred and fifteen (315) of the sampled respondents ticked ‘High’ performance, whilst one hundred and twenty-nine (129) ticked ‘Low’ performance. Lastly, the ‘Learning adventure’ column as shown in Table 4, indicated that two hundred and eight-seven (287) respondents tagged the performance of this proxy as ‘High’; whilst one hundred and sixteen (167) as low performance within the study population.

Data Analysis

This section presents the descriptive and inferential statistical results of the analyses of the study data. The analysis begins with the preliminary analysis, followed with the descriptive analyses. In this subsection, the data harvested from the field survey as earlier presented was analysed using simple percentage distribution for each of the study variables under review.

Table 5: Investigation in CMT Proxies

Observed	Frequency	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Disagree	230	50.7	50.7
Neutral	24	5.3	55.9
Agree	200	44.1	100.0
Total	454	100.0	

Source: Computed from Field Data 2024

Presented in Table 5 is the statistical results of the surveyed data from the field on the use of Investigation Strategy in managing conflicts to enhance performance of small businesses in central business hub of Borno State. Here, about two hundred and thirty (230) representing 51% of the respondents disagreed with the use of Investigation strategy as against two hundred (200) representing 44% respondents, who agreed that the use of Investigation strategy in conflict management is key in enhancing the performance of small businesses in the study area. However, twenty-four (24) representing about 5% of the sampled population gave a neutral opinion of the use of this strategy by small business operators.

Table 6: Dialogue in CMT Proxies

Observed	Frequency	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Disagree	15	3.3	3.3
Neutral	6	1.3	4.6
Agree	433	95.4	100.0
Total	454	100.0	

Source: Computed from Field Data 2024

In Table 6 is the statistical results presented on the surveyed data from the field on the use of Dialogue Strategy in managing conflicts to enhance performance of small businesses in central business hub of Borno State. Here, a total of four hundred and thirty-three (433) representing 95% of the respondents agreed with the use of this strategy as against fifteen (15) and six (6) collectively representing 5% respondents who ticked 'Disagreed' and 'Neutral' respectively, that the use of this strategy of conflict management is relative to the performance of small businesses in the study area.

Table 7: Arbitration in CMT Proxies

Observed	Frequency	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Disagree	232	51.1	51.1
Neutral	27	5.9	57.0
Agree	195	43.0	100.0
Total	454	100.0	

Source: Computed from Field Data, 2024

Table 7 presents the statistical results of preliminary of the data surveyed from the field on the use of Arbitration Strategy in managing conflicts by small business operators in the quest for business performance in central business hub of Borno State. It gives two hundred and thirty-two (232) representing 51% of the sampled respondents who disagreed with the use of Arbitration strategy as against one hundred

and ninety-five (195) representing 43% of the respondents, who agreed that the use of Arbitration strategy enhances the performance of small businesses in the study area. However, twenty-seven (27) representing about 6% of the sampled population gave a neutral opinion in this regard.

Table 8: Enforcement in CMT Proxies

Observed	Frequency	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Disagree	27	5.9	5.9
Neutral	12	2.6	8.6
Agree	415	91.4	100.0
Total	454	100.0	

Source: Computed from Field Data 2024

Presented in Table 8 is the statistical results of the surveyed data from the field on the use of Enforcement Strategy in managing conflicts to enhance performance of small businesses in central business hub of Borno State; whereas four hundred and fifteen (415) representing 91% of the respondents agreed with the use of enforcement strategy as against twenty-seven (27) and twelve (12) collectively representing 9% of the respondents who tagged 'Disagreed' and 'Neutral' respectively, in the use of enforcement strategy in conflict management relative to the performance of small businesses in the study area.

Table 9: Work Environment in CMT Proxies

Observed	Frequency	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Disagree	30	6.6	6.6
Neutral	12	2.6	9.3
Agree	412	90.7	100.0
Total	454	100.0	

Source: Computed from Field Data 2024

In Table 9, the results of the preliminary statistical analysis on the surveyed data of the Work Environment Strategy from the field on the perceptions of the small business operators in central business hub of Borno State. The displayed results indicated that four hundred and twelve (412) representing about 91% of the respondents agreed that the use of this strategy. On the other hand, thirty (30) and twelve (12) jointly representing 9% of the respondents who tagged 'Disagreed' and 'Neutral' options respectively, in the use of work environment strategy in conflict management relative to the performance of small businesses.

Table 10: Diversity Management in CMT Proxies

Observed	Frequency	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Disagree	120	26.4	26.4
Neutral	18	4.0	30.4
Agree	316	69.6	100.0
Total	454	100.0	

Source: Computed from Field Data 2024

Presented in Table 10 is the statistical results of the surveyed data from the field on the use of Diversity Management strategy in managing conflicts to enhance performance of small businesses in central business hub of Borno State. Here, about three hundred and sixteen (316) representing about 70% of the respondents who agreed with the use of Diversity Management strategy as against one hundred and twenty (120) representing 26% of the respondents, disagreed with the use of this strategy in enhancing the performance of small businesses in the study area. However, eighteen (18) representing about 4% of the sampled operators gave a neutral opinion in this regard.

Table 11: Collaboration in CMT Proxies

Observed	Frequency	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Disagree	285	62.8	62.8
Neutral	27	5.9	68.7
Agree	142	31.3	100.0
Total	454	100.0	

Source: Computed from Field Data 2024

Table 11 shows the statistical distribution of the results of the perception of small business operators in the study area on the use of Collaboration Strategy in managing conflicts to enhance performance. Thus, two hundred and eighty-five (285) representing about 63% of the respondents disagreed with the use of Collaboration strategy as against one hundred and forty-two (142) representing 31% of the respondents who agreed that the use of this strategy in conflict management help to achieve small businesses performances in the study area. Nevertheless, twenty-seven (27) representing about 5% of the sampled population gave a neutral opinion of the use of this strategy by small business operators.

Table 12: Learning Adventure in CMT Proxies

Observed	Frequency	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Disagree	24	5.3	5.3
Neutral	10	2.2	7.5
Agree	420	92.5	100.0
Total	454	100.0	

Source: Computed from Field Data 2024

Lastly, Table 12 provides the results of the preliminary analysis of the Learning Adventure data from the field on the perceptions of the small business operators in central business hub of Borno State of Borno State. The displayed results indicated that four hundred and twenty (420) representing about 93% of the respondents agreed on the use of this strategy in business conflict management. On the other hand, twenty-four (24) and ten (10) jointly representing 7% of the respondents who tagged 'Disagreed' and 'Neutral' options respectively in the use of Learning Adventure strategy in conflict management relative to the performance of small businesses in Borno State. Therefore, going by the presentations in Tables 4 – 12 above, there is statistical evidence that all the proxies of CMT are found in use by the sampled registered small businesses in the field. To this end, further descriptive statistical analysis was used to draw inference from the study data.

Descriptive Analysis of CMT Used by Small in Borno State

The descriptive analysis combined Conflict Management Techniques in one pot of analysis as reflected in Table 13.

Table 13 show the mean of the sampled population for this analysis.

Observed	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Usage of CMT in small business performance	454	8.00	24.00	19.6828
Valid N (listwise)	454			

Source: Computed from Field Data 2024

Table 13 presents the descriptive statistics of the combined effect analysis of Conflict Management Techniques on the performances of Small Businesses (SB) in Borno State of Nigeria. The sampled mean of the distribution is 19.6828, which means entries from the sampled mean and above is considered 'Utilised'; whilst entries from the lowest trough to the sampled mean is considered to be 'Not Utilised'.

Table 14: Computed CMT Variables in Used by Small Business Operators

Observed	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not Utilised	127	28.0	28.0
Valid Utilised	327	72.0	100.0
Total	454	100.0	

Source: Computed from Field Data 2024

Table 14 displays the results of the descriptive statistics of the computed CMT data analysis based on the perceptions of the sampled small business operators within the study area. The displayed results indicated that three hundred and twenty-seven (327) representing 72% of the respondents opined that the use of these techniques in business conflict management is confirmed in 'Use (Agree)'. On the other hand, one hundred and twenty-seven (127) representing 28% of the respondents tagged 'Not in Use (Disagree)' option in the use of CMT in conflict management relative to small businesses performance in Borno State, Nigeria. Figure 3 presents bar chart of this distribution.

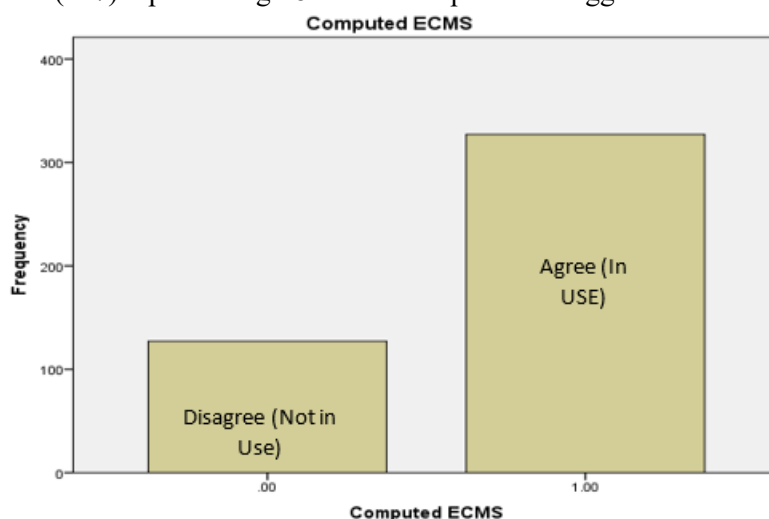


Figure3: Computed Usage of CMS Variables by Small Business

Shown in figure 3, is a pictorial representation of facts presented in Table 4.20 whereas 127 representing 28% of the sampled opinions see CMT in conflict management as ineffective against the view of 327 representing 72% who reported the use of CMT as effective. Thus, this figure provides sufficient statistical evidence that confirmed the use of CMT proxies in the available literature, which affect small businesses performance in central business hub of Borno State in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

CMT use are prominent in every sampled registered business and how well it is managed is crucial for the attainment of small-business performance objectives. The eight (8) variables of CMT were found to be in use by small-business operators to enhance the business performances in Borno State in Nigeria.

Based on the research objectives and findings of the study, the following recommendations were made to reap the theoretical and practical utilities of this thesis report:

- i. It is very important for small-business operators to evaluate conflict situations from time to time; deploy a combination of appropriate CMT; and share conflict management strategic information to enhance small-business performance.
- ii. The governmental and non-governmental agencies should organise routine symposiums and training workshops on the implication of using combination CMT for identification of conflict situations and invoke appropriate learning adventure to manage conflict for effective performance.
- iii. The study recommends for replication of this study in other parts of the country to have a national knowledge of these important dimensions of Conflict Management: Management in Nigeria.

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