

**WORKPLACE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEE  
RETENTION: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF COCA-COLA  
NIGERIA LTD**

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**ABSTRACT:** Studies on conflict management strategies have gained greater attention in recent times and have been shown to be a key factor in retaining employees. The study investigated conflict management strategies and employees' retention in Coca-Cola Nigeria Ltd. The specific objectives were to determine the influence of collaboration strategy on employees' retention and to examine the influence of confrontation strategy on employees' retention. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. A total population of five hundred and eighty-one (581) serves the study population. Two hundred and thirty-seven (237) respondents were selected using Taro Yamane's formula for sample size determination; the study employed a simple random sample technique, data were collected using a structured questionnaire, and were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Linear regression analysis was employed to test the stated hypotheses. All the research hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 alpha level. The findings of the study revealed that collaboration strategy significantly influenced employee retention ( $F(1,226) = 74.150, p < .000$ ), and that confrontation strategy significantly influenced employee retention ( $F(1,226) = 177.385, p < .000$ ). It was concluded that there was a significant and positive influence of conflict management strategies on employees' retention in Coca-Cola Nigeria Ltd. The study therefore recommends that the organisation should take into consideration conflict resolution strategies because it has a significant influence on employees' retention

**Keywords:** Conflict Management, Confrontation Strategy, Collaboration Strategy, Employee Retention

## **INTRODUCTION**

Every organisation spends time to invest heavily in grooming employees and makes them corporately ready for assigned task. The organisation will incur a total loss, if such employees quit after they are fully trained (Mwaniki. & Muathe, 2021). The organisation is completely at a loss when the employees leave their jobs once they are fully trained (Gorde, 2020). However, the survival of any organisation largely depends on the ability to retain its competent staff. Therefore, employee retention is critical to the long-term health and success of any business organisations (Oginni, 2012). This human factor is sometimes considered as the life wire of all organisation without any exception and to this extent, how to retain the workforce especially the best and most desirable employees remain the greatest concern as well as key challenge in any organisation today.

It should be noted that employees are open to good opportunities at hand and on the basis of this premise, as soon as they feel dissatisfied with the current employer or the job; they switch over to the next available job thus increasing the labour turnover ratio which has implication on whether the organisation will survive in the competitive environment or not (Oginni, 2012).

However, numerous determinants of employee retention were examined in this study, including conflict resolution strategies such as collaboration and confrontation. Interestingly, human interaction sometimes leads to conflict, so responses to this conflict require conflict management strategies (Herrity, 2022). Conflict management strategies are the lubricants for peace, harmony and orderliness in the organisation. Thus, the rate at which workers are aggrieved by their employer and coworkers has generated much debate among scholars (Özyildirim & Kayıkçı, 2017). Conflicts are tussles that can arise during an active disagreement of opinions or interests, so it's important to understand how to navigate and resolve them. In the workplace, there are many instances in which conflict can occur between coworkers, and when it does, it is important to resolve the situation before it escalates; otherwise, the feeling and thought of leaving the job is the next thought in the mind of the employee (Herrity, 2022).

However, every employee has the right to leave or remain in their place of employment. Employees leave organisations when they are not satisfied with multiple factors linked to the company (Chatzoudes & Prodromos, 2022). These factors range from lack of recognition to low pay, unfulfilling jobs, inadequate career advancement, poor management practices, untrustworthy leadership, and disordered work cultures. In the absence of all these, it can result to conflict in the organisation. It is now done within the organisation to put in place conflict management strategies such as the collaborating strategy, confrontation strategy, avoidance strategy, and mediating strategy. Otherwise, exiting the organisation for a greener pasture is the next line of action of the employee (Herrity, 2022). Collaboration strategy plays a major role in managing conflict in the organisation it requires great courage and much consideration. Collaborating with the other party involves listening to their perspective, discussing areas of agreement and goals, and ensuring mutual understand. Collaboration requires thinking creatively to resolve the problem without concessions (Shahid, 2018). Mostly, the concern is to satisfy both sides. It is highly assertive and highly cooperative; the goal is to find a win/win solution (Echaaobari, Adim & Ihunda, 2018).

Furthermore, it is important to note that conflict in the workplace is inevitable. If not handled with care, it can result in an employee's exit (Kalei, 2018). However, it is paramount for organisations to adopt the right strategy to ensure they retain competent employees. Employee, who can identify conflicts, acknowledge different opinions and build a consensus that is valuable to many organisations. They make it more likely for personal differences to be set aside so work can continue. Employee retention serves as a strategy in the hands of employers to get employees satisfied and committed to organisational goals and aspirations. Meanwhile, it is the degree of practice that determines the influence of employee retention on the movement of employees (Oginni, 2011). Thus, retaining employees brings about high performance, effectiveness, efficiency and positive social responsibility (Chatzoudes & Prodromos, 2022). Research has shown that an organisation that retains workers is more productive in terms of customer service delivery and societal reputation (Edeh, 2021).

Similarly, the accrued benefit of employee retention highlighted by Allan (2004) includes a reduction in the cost of labour turnover, the retention of company knowledge, the avoidance of service/production interruptions, improved organisational goodwill, and enhanced business and operational efficiency. Based on this, any organisation that does not have a good mechanism for retaining employees will create a lacuna for high worker turnover, absenteeism and if care is not taken, it can result in conflict in the organisation. Hence, there is a need for a conflict management strategy. It is against this background that the study sought to investigate conflict management strategies (collaboration strategy and confrontation strategy) on employee retention in Coca-Cola Nigeria Ltd.

### **Objective of the Study**

The specific objectives were to:

- i. investigate the influence of collaboration strategy on employees' retention and
- ii. examine the influence of confrontation strategy on employees' retention

### **Research Hypotheses**

- i. collaboration strategy will not significantly influence employees' retention
- ii. confrontation strategy will not significantly influence employees' retention

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Concept of Conflict Management***

Conflict is defined as an expressed struggle between two or more interdependent parties perceiving incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals. Conflict at work is certain; however, the result may be influenced by the manner in which the conflict is. The volume and intensity of impending conflict are determined by how the conflict is handled (Meyer, 2004). Effective conflict management encourages enthusiasm, boosts morale, and stimulates individual and organisational development, while ineffective conflict management creates more conflict and harms the whole organisation. (Kunaviktikul, Nuntasupawat, Srisuphan, & Booth, 2000). Effective conflict management involves the use of a variety of styles depending on the conditions of the conflict. (Sportsman & Hamilton, 2007). Conflict resolution is a way for the opposing parties to find a solution to their disagreement that leaves everyone reasonably satisfied (Kayode et al., 2025). Sometimes, the person who resolves a conflict may be a neutral party or mediator, while at other times, they may be someone involved in the conflict who takes an outside perspective to find a solution. (Herrity, 2022). Conflict management related to all spheres of conflict, whether it is on a micro level between members of a family, or between families, between social groups, organisations, communities or on a micro level between multi-national entities, global affiliations or between countries managed (Almost, Doran, Hall & Laschinger, 2010).

### *Conflict Management Strategies*

According to Kilman (2015), conflict management strategy involves the following strategies, namely: collaboration, confrontation, competition, avoidance, accommodation and compromise. However, collaboration and confrontation strategies are identified as strong strategies. For the purpose of this study, collaboration and confrontation will be examined. A collaboration strategy works by combining the views provided by different people. The aim is to find a solution that is creative, which will be acceptable to every individual (Umana, 2019). Collaboration involves working with the other party to find a mutually agreeable solution to a problem. It is known as a win-win strategy. (Herrity, 2022). According to Crystal (2007), collaboration is a conflict resolution technique in which a single individual attempts to work together with another. In the same vein, Kofman (2015) describes it as a productive cooperation. According to him, this strategy unveils people's interests and restrictions, empowering them to create solutions that go beyond the initial possibilities. Collaboration and confrontation strategies when applied appropriately. While collaboration builds relationships, confrontation becomes necessary when protecting the organisation's interests, enforcing standards, or managing conflict (Kayode et al., 2025). Confrontation strategy is used to resolve conflict. When the conflict is unavoidable, it does not always have to be negative. The purpose of confrontation is to minimize the harmful parts of conflict in order to enhance positive potentials (Burgess, 1999). This type of strategy has to do with survival of the fittest. There are different opposing views on issues, and it is more of a win-lose approach (Abioro, Odunlami & Ekpudu, 2019).

### *Employee Retention*

Employee retention is a process in which the employees are persuaded to remain with the organisation for the maximum period of time or until the completion of their service (Biason, 2020). Employee retention refers to management strategies inclined towards helping employees stay longer in the company (Rahim, 2018). Employee retention refers to policies that management deploys to keep workers to stay with their organisation. Scholars has argued that workers retention is the process of providing motivational tools to workers that would encourage them to perform their work effectively and efficiently (Edeh et al., 2021; Kundu & Gahlawat, 2016). Staff retention strategy was also defined as a step undertaken by management to keep workers who have potential skills used to solve problems facing the organisation (Ohunakin et al., 2019).

### *Theoretical Review*

The study adopted Herzberg's two factor theory as the underpinning theory, which was propounded in 1959 based on the comments of some selected employees on their feelings about their work environment. However, Herzberg identified two kinds of characteristics that influence employee working attitudes and level of performance motivation and hygiene factors (Robins, 2009). His assumption was that motivation factors are inherent variables that improve job satisfaction, whereas hygiene factors are extrinsic factors that prevent dissatisfaction. He further asserted that having a full supply of hygiene components does not always lead to employee work satisfaction (Yusof, Kian & Idris, 2013). The result for an organisation using this theory is that addressing employee intrinsic or hygienic aspects will not only keep them from being actively dissatisfied, but will also

not inspire them to put in extra effort to improve performance. Organisations should focus on providing intrinsic or motivational aspects to their employee (Robins, 2009). Furthermore, motivational elements are fundamental to job content and are not the product of stick and carrot incentives; they include psychological need for growth and recognition. When these factors are not available it may result to conflict in the organisation if not handled judiciously. However, the theory is relevant to this study to the extent that a good working environment will have a strong impact on the exit and entry of employees.

### *Empirical Review*

The study of Muidi et al. (2017) examined the influence of collaboration as a conflict management style on Academic Performance in secondary schools in Kenya. Fifty-four teachers participated in the study, and the study employed the use of a questionnaire to collect information on the impact of collaboration on academic performance. Findings of the study indicated that collaborative conflict management style significantly influences students' performance in secondary schools. The study recommended that teachers should embrace collaboration as a method of solving conflicts in their schools.

Kalai (2018) investigated the influence of collaborating strategy on improving employees' performance in an insurance company in Kenya. A descriptive research design was adopted, and data were collected through the use of a questionnaire. The study utilised descriptive and inferential statistics to analyse the results. The result of the study reveals that there was a strong significant influence of collaborating strategy on employees' performance. It was concluded that there was a positive relationship between collaborating strategy and employee performance. It was recommended that managers should apply a collaborative strategy to arrive at a joint decision.

Abioro, Odunlami and Ekpudu (2019) examined conflict management strategies: A tool for industrial harmony. Data were generated through the use of a structured questionnaire. The objectives of the study were to instigate confrontation, collective bargaining and avoidance strategy on industrial harmony. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data. Findings from the study revealed that the collective bargaining strategy has a moderately significant relationship with industrial harmony ( $r=0.418$ ,  $P<0.05$ ). Also, confrontation strategy ( $r = 0.127$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ) and avoidance strategy ( $r=0.131$ ,  $P>0.05$ ) have no significant relationship with industrial harmony. The study concluded that for industrial harmony to be achieved, organisations need to consider collective bargaining strategy as a tool, as well as other integrative conflict management strategies such as accommodation, reconciliation, and negotiation.

Chukwuemeka, Irem and Edeh (2022) explored the effect of conflict resolution strategies on workers' retention in the public sector. The sample frame for this study comprises two hundred and eleven workers drawn from five government parastatals in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. A questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. Linear regression was used to analyse the research hypotheses. The results of the study revealed that conflict resolution strategies have a significant effect on workers' retention. The study concludes that conflict resolution strategies, such as compromising and avoidance strategies, improve the retention of workers in the public sector.

Aremu, Adeyemi and Abogunrin (2021) examined workplace conflict management strategy and organisational sustainability in selected manufacturing organisations in Nigeria. A structured questionnaire was employed as the instrument for collecting primary data. The hypotheses that were formulated in accordance with the research questions were tested using multiple regression analysis, with the aid of SPSS. The results revealed that while the communication and negotiation conflict management strategies significantly and positively influence organisational sustainability, the third-party intervention conflict management strategy negatively influenced it. The study concludes that manufacturing companies that effectively adopt an appropriate conflict management strategy would outperform and outlive those that do not.

Iskamto, Ghazali and Afthanorhan (2022) investigated the influence of Conflict Management in the Workplace and Its Impact on Employee Productivity in Private Companies. Data collection was conducted using questionnaires and data analysis techniques. The results of the simple linear regression equation are  $Y = 45.561 + 0.256X$ . Based on the t-test results,  $T_{count} > T_{table}$ , or  $2,250 > 1,987$ . Based on the data obtained, it can be concluded that conflict significantly influences performance.

Oginni, Ogunlusi and Faseyiku (2013) conducted a study of employee retention strategies and organisational survival in private universities in the South-West region of Nigeria. Competitive pay, facilities, dignity and respect, job security, training support, recognition and reward were identified as the retention strategies commonly adopted as practice in the private universities in Nigeria. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that the private universities in Nigeria should sustain and improve on the existing retention strategies for the survival of the organisation

Omene (2021) explored conflict management strategies as a prerequisite for effective organisational performance. The findings revealed that good conflict management techniques will greatly improve decision outcomes and productivity. Effective management strategies in conflict resolution will boost good communication, time management, cooperation and organisational productivity. It was also revealed that conflict resolution strategy helps to improve interpersonal relations among management and staff in an organisation. It was therefore concluded that the management of the organisation should initiate relevant conflict resolution procedures that are capable of driving the workforce positively and also create additional channels of communication with employees as a means of obtaining prompt feedback on organisational policies, so that conflicting interests will not arise.

Akhtar and Hassan (2021) investigated the conflict management styles as predictors of organisational commitment in university teachers. The data collection period was one year. A cross-sectional research design was employed. The participants included 400 university teachers. The findings revealed that teachers scoring higher on integrating, obliging, and compromising tend to have a stronger commitment to their organisations. A hierarchical regression analysis showed that integrating style strongly predicted teachers' commitment to their organisations. It was concluded that implications for teaching faculty of universities in handling their conflicts with chairpersons of academic departments is important.

### *Gap in Literature*

The study investigated conflict resolution strategies and employee retention. Based on the reviewed articles, it is clear that little research has examined the link between conflict management strategy and employee retention. For instance, the studies by Akhter and Hassan (2021) and Iskamto et al. (2022) linked organisational sustainability and employee productivity. Little research has examined employee retention in Nigeria (Chukwuemaka, Irem, & Edeh, 2022). Interestingly, most studies focused on collaboration, communication, and avoidance strategies (Muidi et al., 2017; Kalai, 2018). Except for the study of Abioro et al. (2019), who investigated confrontation strategy. Also, this type of study is limited to a manufacturing company. In light of these, the current study was conducted to examine conflict management strategies and employee retention, addressing the existing gap in the literature.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a descriptive survey design to enable the researcher to collect data from respondents on variables such as collaboration and confrontation strategies as independent variables and employees' retention as the dependent variable. Without the manipulation of any of the variables. The entire population of the study stood at five hundred and eighty-one (581). A total of two hundred and thirty-seven (237) respondents were selected for the study. This sample size was derived using Taro Yamane formula (Yamane, 1967). However, the study employed a simple random sampling technique to ensure equal participation. This study was carried out using both primary and secondary data sources. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. For the purposes of this study, the researcher relied on primary data collection. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: A, B, and C. Section A covers the respondents' demographic data. Section B consists of 2 subscales. Namely: collaboration strategy scale, confrontation strategy scale. While section C covers employee retention, a 5-point rating scale was used to measure the response in sections B and C. The 5 rating scales ranged from 5 (Strongly Agree) to 1 (Strongly Disagree). Table 1.1 lists the variables and sources of the adopted questionnaire.

**Table 1.1: Source of Adopted Items**

S/N	Objectives	Variables	Number of items	Cronbach alpha	Source of instrument
1.	<b>Conflict Management Strategies</b>	Collaboration strategy	5	0.95	Abioro Odunlami & Ekpudu (2019)
		confrontation strategy	6	0.87	Abioro Odunlami & Ekpudu (2019)
2.	<b>Employee Retention</b>	Employee' Retention	15	0.79	Alexandra & Henry (2009)

*Source: (Researcher's Computation, 2025)*

Data was collected and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the demographic characteristics of the respondents, while inferential statistics were adopted to test the hypotheses using linear regression. All analyses were conducted at a 0.05

alpha level of significance. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 21.0 software was used to conduct the analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### *Hypotheses Testing*

**Hypothesis one: There is no significant influence of collaboration strategy on employee retention in the workplace.**

**Table 1.2** ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1390.421	1	278.084	74.150	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	832.562	226	3.750		
	Total	2222.982	227			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Retention Scale

b. Predictors: (Constant), Collaboration strategy

Table 1.2 shows that collaboration strategy significantly predicts employee retention,  $F(1, 226) = 74.150, p < .000$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This largely indicates that the regression model explains a significant portion of the variance in employee retention compared to the unexplained variance. The implications of these findings suggest that improving collaboration strategies in the workplace will significantly enhance employee retention. That is, organisations that foster teamwork, communication, and cooperative work environments are likely to retain their competent staff.

**Hypothesis Two: There is no significant influence of confrontation strategy on employee retention**

**Table 1.4** ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1777.954	1	355.591	177.385	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	445.028	226	2.005		
	Total	2222.982	227			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Retention Scale

b. Predictors: (Constant), confrontation strategy

Table 1.4 above shows that confrontation strategy significantly predicts employee retention,  $F(1, 226) = 177.385, p < .001$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that the regression model explains a significant portion of the variance in employee retention compared to the unexplained variance. This suggests that effective confrontation strategies play a crucial role in improving employee retention.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study examined the influence of conflict management strategy on employee retention. The hypothesis one stated that there is no significant influence of collaboration strategy on employee retention. The hypothesis was rejected. The result indicated that the collaboration strategy significantly influenced employee retention. This result concurs with that of Muidi et al. (2017), who asserted that a collaboration strategy significantly influenced academic performance.

The second hypothesis stated that there is no significant influence of confrontation strategy on employee retention. The objective of the study was in line with the postulated hypothesis. However, this hypothesis was rejected because the results reveal a significant influence of the confrontation strategy on employee retention. This result does not corroborate the findings of Abioro et al. (2019), who asserted that the confrontation strategy has no significant relationship with industrial harmony. This study is in line with the assertion of Kayode et al. (2025) that a confrontation strategy is most needed when protecting an organisation's interests, enforcing standards, or managing conflict (Kayode et al., 2025).

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The study explored the influence of conflict resolution strategies and employees' retention in the workplace. However, based on the findings, it can be concluded that collaboration and confrontation strategies were better strategies for resolving conflict and retaining competent employees in the organisation. The study finds that the collaboration strategy significantly influenced employees' retention in the organisation. In the same vein, the study established that confrontation strategy was statistically significant to employees' retention in the organisation. However, it is pertinent to note that conflict is inevitable in the organisation, and if it isn't properly managed, it can lead to employees exiting the organisation even without notifying the management.

Based on the findings, it was recommended that the organisation consider conflict management strategies, as they significantly influence employees' retention. Management should adopt a collaboration strategy to manage conflicts and retain competent employees, as this approach positively impacts employees' retention. That is, adopting this strategy will reduce the turnover rate in the organisation. The confrontation strategy serves as a win-lose conflict management approach. However, the organisation should aim to adopt a confrontation strategy and focus more on the win-win aspect of the strategy, as it ensures the organisation's quality standards are enforced and maintained, especially regarding their customers. Additionally, this strategy is essential to protect the organisation from legal and reputational damage.

## *Suggestion for Further Studies*

The study investigated conflict management strategies and employee retention in the workplace. The same study can be replicated to determine the relationship between the two variables. In this study, conflict management strategies were linked to employees' retention. Further studies can be carried out to link conflict management strategies with other variables, such as organisational development, career advancement, and work engagement, to compare findings.

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