

**INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES USED AT  
ORYX ENERGY COMPANY LIMITED OF LUSAKA-ZAMBIA**

**BY**

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SCIENCE IN PEACE, LEADERSHIP AND CONFLICT  
RESOLUTION**

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this project entitled “Interpersonal conflict management strategies used at oryx energy company limited of Lusaka Zambia” is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree or any other award by any other University, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

.....  
Samanana. P. Kapashi

.....  
Date:

## **CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL**

This dissertation of Samanana. Kapashi Petronellah has been approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Masters of Science in peace, leadership and conflict resolution by the University of Zambia and Zimbabwe Open University.

Signed: .....Date.....

## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to my father Mr. Aaron Samanana, my mother Martha Kakenge, my late sister Kutemba, my brothers Kakoma and Mulongesa and my younger sister Kutemba.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

Many thanks go to the Almighty God for the wonderful love and care He gave me throughout the period of writing this research work. I would also like to sincerely appreciate the support, assistance and goodwill received from various people during the writing of this project. I appreciate the immense contribution of my Supervisor Mr. A.L.H. Moonga for his inspirational guidance which made me work hard towards the completion of this academic exercise. My greatest thanks also go to the course coordinator Dr. muleya. G, the lecturers Mr. Mwanabayeke, Dr. Moyo and Mrs Simuyaba. Lastly, my appreciation goes to all the participants for their willingness to share their views.

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## ABSTRACT

This study sought to assess interpersonal conflict management strategies used at Oryx energy company limited of Lusaka-Zambia. This took a qualitative case study research design whose main objectives were to establish the perception that employers and employees had on the term conflict management, establish the strategies used in conflict management, identify the causes of interpersonal conflicts, explore the effects and establishing the challenges faced in conflict management. The population included all the employers and employees of Oryx Energy Company Limited with the sample of 11 participants which comprised of 1 employer and 10 employees. The findings of the study were that some employees and the employer had a good understanding of the term conflict management. Most of them stated that conflict management is a way of resolving a conflict. Other findings were that interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers were caused by favoritism, communication breakdown, unsatisfactory labor allocations and laziness. It was also established that conflict in work places affect the company's productivity, employees' morale towards work and cause divisions. Similarly, the study also established that challenges faced by the management in conflict management process were employees' inability to read the laid down procedures and lack of external support from unions and government. However, most of all, the study found out that among the variety of strategies used, dialogue and collaboration were found to be the most effective ones in the resolution process of conflicts. From the findings, it was concluded that all the objectives were exhausted accordingly. The findings were good and displacement was done according to all the objectives. The study however, gave a number of recommendations in line with the objectives. These recommendations were as follows: Labour experts and authorities in the Ministry of labour should hold workshops that would include training in management of conflicts in the Organizations, employers should also be encouraged to adopt a compromising style and strategies such as no attention, physical separation and limited interaction in conflict management. Above all, the significance of the study was to be applicable to situations that try to resolve interpersonal conflicts between employers and employees and help government and stakeholders in adopting effective measures for conflict resolutions

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the following on the interpersonal conflict management strategies used at oryx energy company limited of Lusaka-Zambia: Background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, study objectives, study questions, significance, limitations of the study and definition of terms.

#### **1.1 Background to the study**

The term conflict has been defined differently by different scholars from different fields of study. According to Boothe (1993) the term conflict is referred to a serious disagreement or argument, typically a protracted one, between two or more groups of people. If conflict is left unchecked, its effects may be devastating.

Profit making Organizations have traditionally been expected to produce goods and services to the society for the benefit of its consumers. An Organization has the responsibility to develop a favorable attitude in its employees through rules that would promote productivity, where workers interact with one another and with their employers, (Boothe, 1993). Communities the world over look up to the well skilled and competent employers of these profit making organizations for the nurturing of those innovative ideas which transform the technological, economic and social dimensions of people's lives towards development (UNESCO, 2005). This is one of the reasons why governments, whether in developed or developing nations, usually allocate huge sums of money in training appropriate manpower, developing suitable policies, and providing the needed infrastructure for the smooth running of Organizations.

Businesses are therefore dear to many people, as they are believed to be the cradle of development and progress as they change and shape the lives of individuals and nation at large. Therefore, one of the last phenomena that should be avoided in these business organizations is conflict that hampers productivity even though conflict is found in any human environment. Loomis (1965) explains that conflict is an ever-present reality in human relations, and that there is no known organization that is exempt from it. Even in the business Organization environment, where the

primary aim is to manufacture, produce and supply the consumers for growth and progress, has its fair share of a variety of conflicts, such as conflict between employers and employees, which at times ends in violence.

Almost every day we hear of cases where employees and employers engage in passive and active conflict over various issues that concern their practices and labour offices and unions are overwhelmingly inundated with reports of conflict. In most cases, unresolved conflicts result in communication breakdown that also culminates into inappropriate operation of the Organization. In other instances, employers physically fight with employees over certain issues. Such situations disturb the tone and climate of the Organization and ultimately the performance of employees is negatively affected (Parker, 1974.)

Cole (1998) states that conflict is a condition that arises whenever the perceived interests of an individual or a group clash with those of another individual or a group in such a way that strong emotions are aroused and compromise is not considered to be an option. Similarly, Cannie(2002) defines conflict as a disagreement or struggle between two or more people. On the other hand, Hart (2002) states that conflict is a state of opposition, disagreement or incompatibility between two or more people or groups of people which is sometimes characterized by physical violence or assault. According to Meeks (2005) conflict is a disagreement between two or more people or between two or more choices.

From these definitions, conflict can be seen as a contest of opposing forces or power, a struggle to resist or overcome. It is also seen that conflict exists whenever incompatible perception or activities occur. Conflict can also be a situation in which there are incompatible goals, thought or emotions within or between individuals or groups that lead to opposition (Sampo, 2015).

Meeks (2005) is of the view that conflict emerges in many aspects of human life explaining that conflict occurs in the family, in the community and in an organization such as a business. Conflict also may surface within oneself and can be centered on different needs and values a person has. As Covey (2002) has observed, conflict emerges when one party decides that things are not moving the way they should and seeks a change, which is not agreed to by the other party. This shows that it takes one party to declare a conflict which the other party is drawn into.

Tannen and Debra (2003) argued that where there is a change, there will be conflict since conflict is a natural part of the change process. They argue that conflict is actually the main vehicle through which change takes place in society. In this regard, Girard, (1996), asserted that the rapid pace of change in society over the last few decades has far outstripped the human body's natural evolutionary change rate, hence, the many conflicts in the world (Sampo, 2015).

While improved performance in Organization is expected, training employees and employers in mediation skills is frequently neglected. The impact has reflected in frequent and repeated conflicts in organizations manifesting in boycotts, riots, strikes, as well as breakdown of employers capacities and accountability in some organizations. Conflict management skills for employers in most organizations have not been emphasized (Rejoice, 1993).

Burton (1969), suggested that if conflict builds towards crisis, successful management should be able to turn the conflicting forces towards a constructive rather than a destructive direction. Johns (1988), conflict is natural and in many ways inevitable because of the natural tendency in almost every person to presume that their way of thinking and doing things is only the best, but also the only right way. Conflicts may be so complex that they may not be easy to handle, or safely eradicated, even from the start. Managing conflicts, therefore, can prevent them from escalating into greater problems (Parker, 1974) which could reverse the many gains of a given organization. Even though conflicts are often perceived as negative, and as such must be eradicated at all costs, there is evidence that conflict is not necessarily, or always negative; conflict can be productive and in fact become a necessary part of positive interpersonal relationship, creating problem-solving and group cohesiveness to enhance leadership (Wilson, 2007).

Conflict is found in all institutions such as profit making Organizations. From this, Zambian Business Organizations also have their own share of conflict. What has not been established in the Zambian situation is to assess the interpersonal conflict management strategies used to manage conflict between employees and employers in profit making organizations. Therefore, this study was aimed at assessing the conflict management strategies used to manage interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers in selected profit making Organizations in Lusaka, a case study of Oryx Energy Company.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Loomis (1965) stated that conflict is an inevitable ever-present reality in human relations, and there is no known organization whose employers and employees are exempted from it. Therefore, if left unresolved, conflicts between employees and employers may end up affecting the productivity of the organization or company, however it has been noted that various conflict resolution strategies have been employed to resolve the situation (Wilson, 2007), but interpersonal conflicts between employers and employees have remained persistent in most, if not all profit-making organizations and the cause is not known. Some scholars have attributed the cause to strategies used to resolve conflict. They argued that the strategies used do not work effectively, and this researcher however, did not find any literature on the assessment of interpersonal conflicts management resolution strategies used between employees and employers in profit making organizations, therefore it was from this fact that the researcher endeavored to assess the extent and effectiveness to which the various conflict management resolution strategies put in place are working and being used by employers and employees in resolving conflicts in profit making Organizations in Lusaka province of Zambia under the title, *An assessment of interpersonal conflict management strategies between employees and employers in profit making organizations in Zambia.*

## **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to assess the strategies used in conflict resolution exercise and establish a new literature in addition to the already existing one on the usefulness and effectiveness of the strategies in conflict resolution exercise in organizations and companies and perhaps provide necessary information to policy makers and other stakeholder of the best strategies to adopt in resolving interpersonal conflicts in profit-making organizations.

## **1.4 Objectives**

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Establish the perception of the term “conflict management” by employers and employees at Oryx Energy Company Limited



2. Establish the strategies used by employers in conflict management at Oryx Energy Company limited.
3. Identify the causes of interpersonal conflicts between employers and employees at Oryx Energy Company limited.
4. Explore the effects of interpersonal conflicts between employers and employees at Oryx Energy Company limited.
5. Establish the challenges faced by employers and employees in resolving conflict between employer and employee at Oryx Energy.

### **1.5. Research Questions**

The following were the proposed research questions that guided the study.

1. What perceptions do employers and employees have on the term conflict management at Oryx Energy Company Limited?
2. What strategies do employers use to manage conflict at Oryx Energy Company limited?
3. What are the causes of interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers at Oryx Energy Company limited?
4. What are the effects of interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers at Oryx Energy Company limited?
5. What challenges do management face in resolving conflict at Oryx Energy Company limited?

### **1.5 Significance of the study**

The results of this study may be applicable in situations that try to resolve interpersonal conflict between employers and employees currently taking place in work places in profit making organizations in Zambia and elsewhere.

The findings may be useful to peace and conflict students, conflict analysts and resolvers and other scholars of peace and conflict as it will hopefully increase their awareness of the values of conflict as well as conflict management strategies which are constructive and beneficial to the Organization.

The findings may help managers of Organizations and other Business stakeholders to adopt measures to minimize conflict in Organizations. It will also add to the literature on management strategies of interpersonal conflict between employers and employees in profit making Organizations.

The study and its findings may also be relevant to master of political science students and lecturers as it provides more knowledge on the already existing literature on conflict management.

### **1.6 Delimitations of the Study**

The study was confined to Profit making Organizations in Lusaka Province because the researcher resided there, hence making it more accessible to carry out the research.

### **1.7 Limitations of the study**

The study was confined to one selected profit making organization of Lusaka Province, hence, the findings may not necessarily represent all profit making Organizations in the district and country, therefore, similar studies may need to be carried out in other profit making Organizations in order to generalise the results. The researcher is also expected to face the following other challenges: incomplete or omissions of answers in the questionnaires by respondents, and language barriers in some cases.

### **1.8 Definition of terms**

This section explains the meanings of the main concepts and terms used in this research namely, conflict, conflict management, interpersonal conflict and strategy.

**Interpersonal conflict:** refers to differences or unharmonious interests concerning goals and policies that create anger or resentment.

**Conflict:** refers to a state of unresolved differences between individuals or two or more groups of people.

**Conflict management:** refers to ways of resolving conflict between two conflict parties.

**Strategy:** refers to techniques put in place to curb or settle a certain situation

### **Summary**

The chapter introduced the study on assessment of interpersonal conflict management strategies used in profit making Organization of Lusaka Province. The chapter also presented the background to the problem, the problem statement, research objectives and questions, purpose and significance of the study and the theoretical perspectives applied to the study. The next chapter provides a review of literature relevant to the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

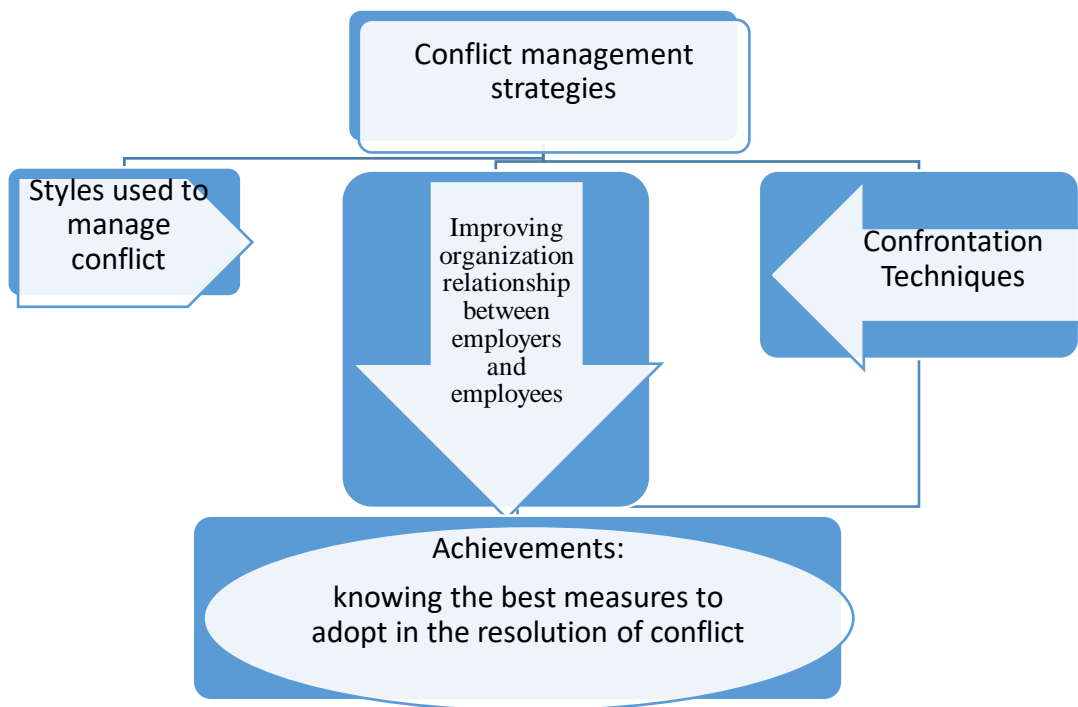
The previous chapter looked at the background of conflict in Profit making Organizations. It gave the problem statement and highlighted the objectives and scope of the study. This chapter however, reviews literature from different perspectives around the world related to conflict management strategies in profit making organizations and present literature on global, African and Zambian perspectives.

#### **2.1 Theoretical framework**

According to Kirchoff and Adams (1982) cited in Sompa, (2015), there are two basic, but opposing, views of conflict, the traditional and the contemporary. The traditional view sees conflict as being primarily negative. In this view, conflict is caused by troublemakers; it is bad; and it should be avoided. The researcher who views conflict in this way avoids admitting that it exists, keeps it under cover, and tries to suppress it. The contemporary view sees conflict in a more positive light. According to this view, conflict is inevitable. It is a natural result of change and is frequently beneficial to the manager in an institution or organization if properly managed. This research will however use the contemporary conflict theory. According to this view, conflict is inevitable and is a natural part of human life, (Kirch off and Adams, 1982). It is relevant to the research as it confirms that conflicts are inevitable and are a natural part of human life.

## 2.2 Conceptual framework

Orodho (2009), defines a conceptual framework as a model of presentation where a researcher represents the relationship between variables in the study and shows the relationship diagrammatically.



The model above simply shows different management strategies and achievement which are styles, Improving organization relationship between employers and employees and confrontation techniques that can be used to manage interpersonal conflict between employers and employees in the Organization and knowing the best measures to adopt in resolving conflict

## **2.3 Types of conflicts**

The literature consulted identifies four types of conflict which are: Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Intra-group and Intergroup conflicts. These types of conflicts are explained in the following sections.

### **Intrapersonal Conflict**

Larson and Mildred (2000), point out that intrapersonal conflict occurs within a person and that one can experience intrapersonal conflict with respect to the amount of resources one has by hearing internal voices that disagree. Further, Orlich, et al (2001) explains that in intrapersonal conflict the individual tries to reconcile conflict within his or her own value structure. Similarly, Hart (2000), observes that conflict may not only occur in one's physical body but it often occupies one's thoughts and causes a great deal of emotion. Larson and Mildred (2000), also agree that intrapersonal conflict occurs within an individual and can involve some form of goal or cognitive conflict. They argue that intrapersonal conflict occurs when a person's behaviour results in positive and negative outcomes or incompatible outcomes, (Sompa, 2015).

### **Interpersonal conflict**

While Meek, (2005), states that interpersonal conflict occurs between two or more persons, Larson and Mildred (2000), refer to interpersonal conflict as clashes that involve two or more individuals who perceive each other as being in opposition to preferred outcomes and or attitudes, values or behaviours. Similarly, Johns (1988), indicates that interpersonal conflict is a situation in which one or both individuals in a relationship are experiencing difficulty in working or living with each other. Expanding on this point, Nelson-Jones states that interpersonal conflict usually occurs due to differences or incompatibilities, needs, goals or styles clash. Similar to this assertion is that of Orlich et al (2001), who observed that in interpersonal conflict the values of different individuals or groups openly clash.

### **Intra-group Conflict**

This type of conflict emerges between people who identify themselves as belonging to the same group. Larson and Mildred (2000), explain that intra-group conflict is a clash among some or all

of a group's members which often affects the group's progress and effectiveness. In an Organization situation, an intra-group conflict may occur within members of an Organization where they sit in close proximity and interact with each other. Such conflict can also occur among the Organizational staff that has different views on the kind of measures appropriate for punishing employees. In this case, some employees may support the use of certain punishment while others may support other milder forms of punishment for misbehavior, (Sompa, 2015).

### **Intergroup conflict**

This emerges between two or more groups of people. Larson and Mildred (2000), define intergroup conflict as opposition and clashes that arise between two or more groups. Wilmet and Hocker (1998), indicate that such conflicts are highly intense and costly to the group involved. Intergroup conflict can therefore occur between two or more Organizations. According to Scott (2001), intergroup conflict within organizations occurs at three levels: vertical, horizontal and line staff, these are explained as follows:

- i. Vertical conflict refers to clashes between levels in an organization. For example, vertical conflict occurs when superiors try to control subordinates too tightly as subordinates resist the control.
- ii. Horizontal conflict refers to clashes between groups of employees at the same hierarchical level in an organization. In an Organizational situation horizontal conflict will occur if one department desires a larger proportion of scarce resources at the expense of other departments.
- iii. Line-staff conflict is a clash over authority relationships. As Wattam (2005), indicates, line staff conflict can easily occur from the different organizational roles of line and staff departments.

It is worth remembering that conflict that emerges in oneself, in marriages, in the family, the community, in an organization or country can be grouped under one or more of the types mentioned. It is also important to note that conflict can arise between people who have the same goals but disagree on the means by which the goals can be achieved.

Having looked at the different types of conflicts that occur in an institution such as the profit making organizations, it should however be noted that this research focused on interpersonal conflicts particularly between employers and employees in public and private Organizations.

## **2.1 Causes of conflicts between employers and employees in business organizations**

Other literatures have noted that conflicts originate from more than one source, and so their true origins may be hard to identify, (Sompa, 2015). There are a number of reasons that have been pointed out as to what causes interpersonal conflicts between employers and employees as explained below.

### **2.1.0 Difference in Perception**

Sompa indicates that in Kenya, people disagree and see things differently because of different levels of education, social standing, religion, personality, belief structure, past experience, affection shown in the home and a lot of other factors that affect human behaviour. For example, there are differences in approach as to what is considered polite and appropriate behaviour. In some cultures, the word 'yes' means, 'I hear' and in others, it means 'I agree'. The level of tolerance for being around someone speaking a foreign language; politeness measured in terms of gallantry or etiquette, for example standing up for a woman who approaches a table, yielding a seat on the bus to an older person and manner of expected dress are all examples of what causes conflict between people.

Kipyego (2009), further states that people have different styles, principles, values, beliefs and slogans which in turn determine their choices and objectives; as a result, this provokes conflicts.

De Bono (1985), in his study, also indicates that conflicts arise when two groups or individuals interacting in the same situation see the situation differently because of different sets of settings, information pertaining to the universe, awareness, background, disposition, reason or outlook. He further observed that individuals think and perceive in a certain manner.

In the book written by Nyamajiwa (2000), the author pointed out goal incompatibility which occurs when there is a lack of agreement concerning the direction of evaluating task accomplishment. This cause of conflict is said to be the most frequent in an organization. In an organization,



individual employees may bring with them different time and goal orientations that may create a state of high differentiation with what is followed in the organization, (Sompa, 2015).

### **2.1.1 Poor working conditions**

Poor working conditions are also another source of conflicts. For example, Organizations face a lot of difficulties in providing the necessary facilities and resources. Okotoni (2003), indicates that employees work in highly demotivating conditions due to poor pay by the employers coupled with lack of clear increments in salaries, this has however resulted in the causes of conflicts between employees and employers in organizations, (Sompa, 2015).

### **2.1.2 Incompetence of employers**

Sompa also in her study quoted Yee and Cuba (1996) who explained another cause of conflict between employers and employees which is related to the incompetence of employers. The dual state that, employees are unable to adapt and respond to complexities in their organizations fast; hence, employers get impatient because they expect a quick positive change, and when change fails to occur that fast, the employer is accused of being a low performer. In some cases, he or she is quickly transferred from the organization and a new one is brought in. Rono (2000) shares the above views and indicates that some employers display poor leadership qualities that create conflicts between them and their employees in organizations.

The findings of the Republic of Kenya (2001) indicate that employers create conflicts in their organizations because of applying wrong managerial skills in planning, budgeting and expenditure control. In some cases, employers do not apply proper use of accounting instructions provided by the Ministry of Labour in cases of government organization. This leads to misallocation of resources resulting into lack of essential commodities and services.

Gordon (1991), indicates that inexperienced employers sometimes run into serious problems when they fail to use their scarce resources properly. Meager resources available in the organization may be used on trivial projects while major ones were untouched.

### **Poor job performance**

There are times when employers differ greatly with employees over the job performance in Companies. According to Republic of Kenya (2001), employers place a lot of pressure on the employees claiming that they contribute to poor output performance of the Company or organization. Some employers at times agitate for the transfer of low performing employees to other branches. This is supported by a study done by Okotoni (2002), that poorly performing Companies are characterized by a lot of conflicts between the employees and the employers. He further states that, employees are always charged for being absent from work for no proper reason. But in the case where the employer is absent, no action is taken. This however causes conflicts to arise between the two parties involved.

At times, customers differ greatly with the employees over service performance. According to Gordon (1991), customers place a lot of pressure on the employees when demand goes up and supply gets low. Such customers at times agitate for the removal of the management and transfer of employees to other branches. This is supported by Okotoni and Okotoni (2003), that poorly performing organizations or Companies many at times are characterized by a lot of conflicts by the stakeholders.

### **Favoritism**

Another study by Omboko (2010), reveals that employers sometimes find themselves in conflict with employees due to the employer favouring some employees. A case of such favoritism was reported by Omboko (2010), where an employer was accused by some employees of favouring other employees to an extent of allowing their children to get products freely without paying prices. He further goes on to state that employees and employers have conflicts which have remained unsettled over time which creates anxiety and stress which further intensifies existing conflicts.

### **2.1.3 Over working the employees**

Seamus (1995), in his survey studies conducted in some organizations of Cape Town indicates that over working has also contributed to the rampant increase of conflicts. According to him, over working the employees causes conflicts between employers and employees who are unmotivated in their work. They work to earn a salary. Foster (1989), affirm this view and indicates that unmotivated employees will not produce good results. Complaint, laxity, grumbling and fighting the employer characterizes their work. The employer will always be in the centre of blame. He or she will not get anything done without running into trouble with the employees, (Sampo, 2015).

Kingala (2000) concurs with the above authors and indicates that men and women who have no positive work culture have no interest in working for the benefit of the Company. These employees find themselves inside their offices doing a job they do not like but because they need money, they stick to it. He also indicates that due to lack of interest in working, the employees become increasingly brutal to the customers. Such employees also begin to patronize with influential politicians and receive protection. An employee in this category always causes trouble to the employer.

Republic of Kenya (2001), demonstrates that some employees are forced into some profession without commitment. These employees cause problems, lack discipline, and are chronic absentees in Companies. Some engage in immoral acts with each other or incite them against the managers. Philips (2000) affirms the above views and indicates that there are employees who take up the noble profession and yet they have no interest in it. These employees display incompetence, laziness and lack interest in office work. They lack self-discipline and are biased and inconsistent in their application of punishment meted out to whoever breaks the rules.

Some employers perceive causes of conflicts in their companies as due to lack of commitment by some employees to work in their companies. There are things that employers do in their companies that pose a serious challenge to company management. Some of these include absenteeism, perennial lateness, dishonesty, inaccessibility and being autocrat or dictatorial according to Katumanga (2000). He further reveals that some employers have been forced to deal with conflicts in their Companies which are due to their own making. Some employers fail to perform well in administration because of frequent absenteeism from their companies.

Okotoni and Okotoni (2003) concur with these views and indicate that situations sometimes arise where the conflicts develop into serious personal differences between the employees and employers and this is transferred into the company environment.

### **Inferiority/Superiority Complex**

Walker (1979) indicates that employers run into conflicts with their employees because of the way they view their office. Such employers tend to be preoccupied with the status of their position, authority and privileges that come with the office. They see the need to defend the sanctity of their office as a fundamental obligation. Walker emphasizes that such employers regard themselves as inseparable from the status of the office. They often react with threat and counter aggressive behaviour when in conflict with the employees. The employees who have a different notion of such leadership are perceived to be perverse. Employees are seen as impractical if not trouble makers, naive, mischievous and easily influenced to commit acts against the employer.

### **Availability of Resources:**

According to Dowling (2003), resources are available assets which may include time, money and material possessions. Meeks (2005), state that conflict may arise when there are insufficient available resources in an organization such as a company. In this instance, employees try to have their share of the available limited resources in the course of the struggle for the limited resources conflicts emerge between employees and employers as well as employees amongst themselves. According to Miller (2005), if resources are not enough to be shared equally, hard decisions are made and that these decisions may provide fertile grounds for conflict because some people may not have their share as wished.

In agreement with this contention, Wattam (2005) also believes that under normal circumstances, conflict occurs when there is scarcity of commodities such as raw materials or intangible things such as prestige, influence, status or time. Irene (2011) also agrees that conflict is likely to be minimal where there is plentiful supply of such commodity and where there is a scarcity, the potential for conflict increases.

## **2.2 Effects of conflicts between employers and employees**

According to Sompa, (2015) Conflicts are part of our lives and are often inevitable. Dealing with conflict and disagreement effectively can be a battle and can create positive outcomes. However, when conflict and disagreement is handled inappropriately, the outcome can be destructive and are rarely in the best interest of either party (Saddaller, 1998). The effects of conflicts however can be positive and negative.

### **2.2.0 Positive effects of conflicts between employers and employees**

Dodge (1962), states that despite the adverse effects that conflict can produce, disagreement between people has its good side. Although the definition of conflict does not seem to be beneficial, it has intrinsic importance when critically scrutinized. A study conducted by Filley (1975), outlined some positive effects of interpersonal conflicts. He states that when two parties who respect each other face a conflicting situation, the conflict management process may help in clarifying the facts and stimulating a search for mutually acceptable solutions. He further noted that, in the case of conflicts between employees and employers, their performance and cohesion is likely to improve, (Sompa, 2015).

Filley (1975) goes on to state that in a conflict situation, an opponent's position is evaluated negatively, and group allegiance is strongly reinforced leading to increased group effort and cohesion. He further pointed out another positive effect of interpersonal conflict stating that the relative ability or power of the parties involved can be identified and measured. Cannie (2002), ascertains that conflict is a pivot around which change takes place in workplaces and the society at large and that when people disagree, it highlights their focus and defines what the important issues are. However, Wheeler and Terrence (1995), indicate that suppression of conflict and dissent is a sure sign that freedom is on the decline and democracy is not being practiced. Likewise, Connie (2002), explains that interpersonal conflict is a useful force in an organization and, if managed correctly, can be a potential force for innovation and change.

In disagreeing with the notion that conflict is inherently destructive, Robbins (1974), asserts that a certain amount of conflict in the organization is healthy as it prevents the organization from stagnating and from producing bad decisions. From this perspective, Larson and Mildred (2000),

believe that when conflicts between employees and employers in the organization are effectively managed, it can lead to outcomes that are productive and can produce a conducive environment. Thus, conflict in itself is neither good nor bad, it should be considered as natural. Larson and Mildred (2000), go on to explain that the impact of interpersonal conflicts in any organization is largely dependent on the way it is treated.

Wattam (2005), also agrees to the assertion that interpersonal conflicts are necessary in any organization in order to stimulate change and innovation and the problems and inefficiencies in working are highlighted. However, attempts to eliminate conflict can lead to such matters not being attended to. Scott (2001), notes that in the organization, healthy competition and rivalry can lead to better decisions being made as attention is more clearly focused on the issue. Eccles and Gabbaro (1995), also note that the impact of such conflict is that groups can become more cohesive and operate more effectively increasing individual motivation which goes a long way to boost standards of performance as a result of commitment and concern to make better decisions.

### **2.2.1 Negative effects of conflicts between employers and employees**

Many scholars have argued that if conflict has its positive side then it has a negative side as well. According to Connie (1987), anyone who has ever worked in an organization knows that conflict exists and that it can have destructive effects on the organization and the members' activities. Kilman (1975), explains that not only can conflict in the work place cause great stress and unhappiness but it also lowers outputs. Furthermore, Barker (2009), states that many times, in the midst of conflict between employers and employees, either of them put their own interests or goals above those of the organization resulting in the lessening of the organizations effectiveness, (Sompa, 2015).

Scott (2001) also opines that frequent and powerful interpersonal conflict in an organization can have a devastating impact on the behaviour of people in that conflict often develops into hostility which also causes people to withdraw both physically and psychologically. In a Company or industrial situation, physical withdrawal can take the form of absence and laziness on the part of the employee. Psychological withdrawal can also take the form of alienation, apathy and indifference. On this score, Tannen and Debora (2003), add that though a solution may be reached

in conflict management, the means of gaining the solution may cause pain to the people involved and general weakening of relationships.

Contributing to the adverse effects of conflict, Cole (1998), assert that conflict between employees and employers can lead to outright hostile or aggressive behaviour. They explain that in some cases, the frustrated individual may show direct aggression against the other individual perceived to be the cause of the conflict. In other instances, Barker (2009) says that aggression may be displaced towards a person who is not directly involved in the situation. For instance, an employee may display aggression on a customer who is not directly involved in a conflict between the employer and the employee by inflicting various forms of punishments on the customer. Wattam (2005) concludes that most people have ample evidence that conflict often produces harmful results because some people have a very low tolerance for disagreement whether it is a result of family background, cultural values or personality characteristics and that interpersonal conflict drains their energy and demoralizes them.

Filley (1975) further states that conflict between employees and employers often result in polarization of the Company between those supporting the employer and those on the side of the employee. No institution can function effectively or achieve its goals if the individuals are polarized and working against each other. Any conflict situation is bound to inhibit the smooth running of the Company and by extension its overall performance.

Kirchoff and Adams (1982) further pointed out some destructive effects of conflicts between employees and employers where they had a feeling of annoyance when something didn't go as expected, hostility where they became aggressive to each other and lack of confidence in the employer by the employees where employees begin to lose trust in their employer. The overall result of such negative effects in the Company is that it reduces the commitment of employees, administrators as well as the customers and at the end of it all, the whole purpose of company is defeated as it detracts from the attainment of goals and objectives.

Research by Omboko (2010), explains that conflicts between employees and employers end up having either of them being transferred or sacked. Due to this, operations in the Company are disrupted which in turn impacts negatively on productivity. This has however seen customers being transferred to other Companies in protest which brings down the morale of the employees. Part of repercussion on Companies include disruption of productivity, inadequate staffing as a

result of transfers, hostility, suspicion and withdrawal from active participation in Company activities, emergency transfer of subject employees and inequitably distributed qualified employees.

It can be seen from the discussion that the notion that conflict has negative effects and thus should be eliminated does not wholly give the right impression. As seen from the literature cited, conflict has been given a different dimension resulting in the idea that conflict is neither inherently good nor bad but simply inevitable wherever people are found. It should be accepted that too much conflict can have adverse effects on individuals, groups and organizations because conflict management involves using up productive time and scarce resources, and diversion of energies that could more constructively be used elsewhere. On the other hand, little or no conflict in an organization can also be a negative sign as it can lead to apathy and lethargy, and provide little or no impetus for change and innovation. Conflicts may be beneficial if they are used as instruments for change or innovation. As seen from the discussion, conflicts can improve relationships and the quality of decision making in an organization if they are managed constructively.

### **2.3 challenges faced in conflict management process**

According to Sompa (2015) both the management and the employees face a number of challenges in the management of conflict in their work places. She indicated among others, challenges such as difficulties by most of the employees to read their terms and conditions of service. She narrated that as per routine, every organization presents to every newly recruited or employed member a set of documents containing condition of service, code of ethics and many others but most of them fail to read and understand them. This then makes it a challenge because even most if not all the procedure to follow when a member is grieved on duty are stipulated in written documents.

The other challenge sited by Gross (2010) were that mostly managements do not have a lay down procedure and the organization policy that clearly indicates what should be followed whenever there is a conflicting situation, thus, making it difficult for most of the employers to hand conflicts.



### 2.3 Global perspective of conflict management strategies

According to Gross (2000), peace advances development, growth, and progress. Peace is order, peace is brother-hood, and peace is life itself. Management is an act of finding a solution to problems or a conflict. Conflict management strategy, therefore, is a method desired to develop peaceful means of amicably ending a state of conflict (Burton, 1990). Miller (2005), described conflict management strategy as a variety of approaches used in terminating conflicts.

A research conducted by Abdul (2013) in Parkistan, states that different organizations in Pakistan use accommodation, avoidance, compromise and collaboration as styles to manage conflict, however, the choice of which one to use depends on the situation. These are highlighted below:

**Avoidance:** The avoiding strategy refers to low assertiveness and low cooperation. Many times employers and employees avoid conflicts out of fear of engaging in a conflict or because they do not have confidence in their conflict management skills. Times when the avoiding mode is appropriate are when one has issues of low importance, to reduce tensions, to buy some time, or when one is in a position of lower power (Abdul, 2013).

**Compromise:** According to Abdul (2013), the times when the compromising mode is appropriate are when one is dealing with issues of moderate importance, when one has equal power status, or when one has a strong commitment for resolution. Employers and employees usually use this style of conflict management as a temporary solution when there are time constraints.

**Accommodation:** Accommodation is another style that is used to manage interpersonal conflicts between employers and employees in the organization (Abdul, 2013). The accommodating mode is low assertiveness and high cooperation. Times when the accommodating mode is appropriate are to show reasonableness, develop performance, create good will, or keep peace. Usually, employers use the accommodating mode when the issue or outcome is of low importance to them.

**Collaboration:** The collaborating mode is high assertiveness and high cooperation. Collaboration has been described as putting an idea on top of an idea in order to achieve the best solution to a conflict. The best solution is defined as a creative solution to the conflict that would not have been generated by a single individual. With such a positive outcome for collaboration, most of the employers preferred to use it when managing conflicts with their employees. However, collaborating takes a great deal of time and energy. Therefore, the collaborating mode can be used

when the conflict warrants the time and energy (Abdul, 2013). In related research by Tosi, (1986), four styles on managing conflicts were identified as competition, collaboration, compromise, avoidance and accommodation. The strategy identified by Meyer (1994), was effective communication which he described as the best because it would make the group aware of the kind of communication which could lead to problem solving.

## **2.4 African perspective of interpersonal conflict management strategies**

Coming down to African perspective of conflict management strategies, in recent years, a great deal of management attention has been directed towards the development of an effective way of managing conflicts between employers and employees in organizations. This is all intended to empower employers and employees to perform and produce results which are essential for the survival of any organization (Omboko, 2010).

Sadallaetal (1987), state that conflict has been a common phenomenon from time immemorial which has remained the main cause of strife between members of an organization. Different individuals while having different goals are prone to interact for the achievement of their mutual gains which in one way or the other lead them to conflict, (Sampo, 2015).

Flippo (2000), pointed out that a total absence of conflict in any organization would be unbelievable, impossible, undesirable, and boring, and a strong indicator that such conflict is suppressed. The existence and prevalence of such conflicts and their traumatic effects cannot be ignored. It needs to be controlled and managed because, when this mutual hostility is not resolved, the effect is disharmony and absence of peace, (Sompa, 2015).

Literature reviewed by Ndhlovu (2006) in South Africa suggested that different organizations managed conflicts in the organization using different conflict management styles which are avoidance, compromise, accommodation and collaboration. These styles are highlighted below:

**Avoidance or withdrawal:** One method of dealing with conflict between employers and employees is to simply withdraw. Avoidance is a decision to do nothing. It is assumed that when employers and employees ignore some conflict situations, the conflict may resolve itself without

requiring any personal involvement. This attempt to maintain neutrality often annoys both parties, but it can be a useful technique for preventing disputes about unimportant matters. “Avoidance is not a successful method for achieving a long-term solution since the original cause of the conflict remains,” (Kindler, 1998:42).

**Integrative/collaborating, powerful-powerful, win-win:** According to Sampo (2015) this style is characterised by mutual differences, but conflict is, at times, regarded as natural and healthy. It requires open confrontations coupled with an objective search for a common solution to the problem. Employers and employees using this style hope and expect that various conflicting viewpoints can be integrated into a new, improved, viewpoint or aim. This style may be labelled as one of cooperation and win-win because the conflict is not coloured by personal opinion and a sincere and true attempt is made to find a correct and real solution. The employer plays a dynamic management role in creating the correct climate for co-operation, and training people in communication skills and group dynamics (Saddler, 1998).

**Compromise win-lose-win-lose:** Employers and employees using this style aim to solve conflict issues by giving up some desired outcomes in order to get mutually desired outcomes. Compromise often involves bargaining by the conflicting parties and generally requires a situation that offers both parties the chance to be in a better position or at least in no worse position after the conflict is resolved. With compromise each person wins some major issues and Lose others (Bartol, 1991). “The way in which people respond to conflict tends to be a reflection of both their assertiveness and their tendency to collaborate. A person who tends to be non-collaborative and non-assertive will probably try to avoid conflict. Also, a person who is collaborative and non-assertive will tend to oblige, and a person who is collaborative and assertive, will tend to negotiate and problem-solve” (Oppenheim, 2000:130). A research carried out by Rejoice (1993), in Kwazulu organizations in South Africa looked into the methods which employers and employees use to handle conflicts. It revealed that employees tend to use authoritarian and power based methods to manage conflicts with each other. Authoritarian methods rely on coercive and position power to force-employees to comply. They include punishment and force of different kinds. The research showed that authoritarian and power based methods of managing conflicts in organizations tend to have short term benefits only, (Sampo, 2015).

### **2.12 Summary of the chapter**

This chapter has reviewed literature on the theoretical and conceptual frame works, types of conflicts, their causes and effects as well as management strategies used to manage the conflicts. Literature is reviewed from different profit making organizations in different countries around the world such as Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, Canada and Pakistan. The next chapter presents the methodology that guides this study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the research methodology. The elements described are the research design, target population, study location, sample size, sampling procedure, research instruments, data collection procedure, data analysis and ethics as well as possible limitations of the study.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

According to Bless and Achola (1988), a research design may be understood as a program which guides the researcher in collecting, analysing and interpreting observed facts. The study used a descriptive research design, particularly a survey design, which is a scientific method used for observing and describing the behaviour of a subject without influencing it in any way. Surveys allow for an anonymous look inside the thought processes of large numbers of people simultaneously, allowing for an opportunity to describe what is not outwardly observable.

In using a descriptive research design, a qualitative approach was taken. A qualitative research is a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data. However, the merits of using a qualitative approach in this study are that, it is less expensive and also permits flexibility in the research, meaning, and the researcher is always prepared to engage in field research, whenever required. The researcher also used quantitative methods of displaying data such as tables in order to enhance the presentation of findings in chapter four.

#### **3.2 Population/Sampling and Representative Sample**

##### **Population**

A population is a group of elements or causes, whether individuals, objects or events, that conform to specific criteria and to which we intend to generalize the results of research, (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:169).

In this case, the research targeted employers and employees in profit making organization in Lusaka, case study of Oryx Energy. The employees were being important in this study because they were the ones currently been affected mostly by conflict in the work places. The employers will be targeted because they are the ones who supervise and control all the on-going Organization activities.

### **Representative Sample**

The sample of the study comprised of one Organization called Oryx Energy Company limited. This Organization was chosen purposively because it comprises of employers and employees from ground level to the top management. The sample comprised of 1 employer and 10 employees from the Organization.

### **Sampling Procedure**

A researcher purposively targeted employers while employees were randomly picked using simple random sampling. Employers were targeted because they are the ones who handle organization matters that affect employee performance in organizations. 10 employees wrote their names that were in turn picked at random from an Organization. Those names that were picked after shuffling were then selected for the study.

### **3.3 Research Instruments**

The data was collected through focus group discussions from employees while interview guide was used to collect data from the employer.

### **3.4 Data collection Procedure**

Creswell (1994), explains that data collection is the process of gathering and measuring information on themes, in an established systematic fashion that enables one to answer stated research questions and evaluate outcomes. This study used qualitative methods of collecting data.

## **Primary Data Collection Instruments**

Primary data is said to be a set of raw information that is collected by the investigator conducting the research. This research used a semi-structured interview guide and a focus group discussion guide to collect primary data.

### **Semi-Structured Interview**

A semi-structured interview is a qualitative method of inquiry that combines a pre-determined set of open questions, these are questions that prompt discussion with the opportunity for the interviewer to explore particular themes or responses further. A semi-structured interview however, does not limit respondents to a set of pre-determined answers and it allows respondents to discuss and raise issues that the researcher may not have considered (Robbins, 1974).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data from two informants. Using the interview guide, one-on-one interviews was conducted and tape recorded to collect data on management strategies of interpersonal conflict between employees and employers from two informants in the study. Due to its flexibility, open and closed- ended questions will be included in the interview schedules to collect in-depth information so as to get a complete and detailed understanding of the issue at hand (Meeks, 2005).

### **Focus Group Discussion Guide**

Focus Group Discussions was conducted and the researcher wrote down all the responses from the respondents. The focus Group Discussion questions were prepared to get more detailed understanding of the employee's knowledge on management strategies of interpersonal conflicts. Focus Group Discussion was conducted with employees and employers. The discussions were facilitated by the researcher to ensure that the informants focus on the topic at hand.

According to Cowling (1990), when properly planned and facilitated, Focus Groups can produce a lot of information quickly and are good for identifying and exploring participants' beliefs and perceptions. Focus Groups are aimed at discussing a fairly tightly defined topic and the emphasis is on interaction within the group (Kogo,2002).

### **Secondary data collection**

Secondary data collection refers to a set of second hand information initially collected and compiled by someone else apart from the current user. In the case of this study, secondary data was gotten from different Organization records including the log book as well as the diary as this is where conflict cases are recorded as well as how they are managed. This was done in order to collect more information related to the topic in case some is left out during the interviews.

### **3.5 Data validation/reliability**

This research used methodological data triangulation in order to validate the data. Methodological triangulation involves the use of multiple qualitative and/or quantitative methods to study the program. For example, results from surveys and interviews could be compared to see if similar results are being found. If the conclusions from each of the methods are the same, then validity is established. Another method that was used to validate data was presence check. This checks that important data are actually present and have not been missed out. To achieve content validity, semi-structured interview Schedules and Focus Group discussion Guide were used as key instruments for data collection. In addition, the researcher made sure that these instruments had all the questions necessary to comprehensively answer the four research questions of the study.

To ensure reliability of findings in a study which is predominantly qualitative, the researcher made sure that the processes of sampling, data collection and analysis are done correctly and accurately. For instance the researcher would ensure that only people who are knowledgeable about interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers in profit making organizations are selected as respondents to the study.

### **3.6 Data presentation and analysis**

According to LeCompte and Schensul (1999), data analysis has been defined as the process of reducing large amounts of collected data to make sense of them. In this study, data were analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis which is an analytic method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns and themes within data. It minimally organizes and describes data set in rich detail. Frequently, it will help interpret various aspects of the research topic (cowling, 1990). The following steps were taken when analysing the data.



1. Familiarization with the data: This phase involved reading and re-reading the data, to become immersed and intimately familiar with its content.
2. Coding: This phase involved generating succinct labels (codes) that identify important features of the data that might be relevant to answering the research question. It involved coding the entire dataset, and after that, collating all the codes and all relevant data extracts, together for later stages of analysis.
3. Searching for themes: This phase involved examining the codes and collated data to identify significant broader patterns of meaning (potential themes). It then involved collating data relevant to each candidate theme, so that the researcher can work with the data and review the viability of each candidate theme.
4. Reviewing themes: This phase involved checking the candidate themes against the dataset, to determine that they show a convincing story of the data, and answers the research question. In this phase, themes are typically refined, which sometimes involves them being split, combined, or discarded.
5. Defining and naming themes: This phase involved developing a detailed analysis of each theme, working out the scope and focus of each theme, determining the ‘story’ of each. It also involves deciding on an informative name for each theme.
6. Writing up: This final phase involved putting together the analytic, narrative and data extracts, and contextualizing the analysis in relation to existing literature.

### **3.7 Summary**

This Chapter has presented the methodology used in the study. It focused on the research design, sampling techniques and procedures, the sample size and methods used to collect and analyze the findings of the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

#### 4.1 Introduction

The preceding Chapter provided the methodology employed for collection and analysis of data in the study. Data were collected from employers and employees. This Chapter presents the results on management strategies of interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers. The results are presented in line with the five objectives set out in Chapter One of this study which is to:

1. Establish the respondents' perception of the term conflict management between employees and employers at Oryx Energy Company limited in Lusaka Province,
2. Identify the causes of interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers at Oryx Energy Company limited in Lusaka Province,
3. Explore the effects of interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers at Oryx Energy Company limited in Lusaka Province,
4. Establish the strategies used by employers in conflict management and determine the most effective ones use dat Oryx Energy Company limited in Lusaka.
5. Establishing the challenges faced by employers and employees in conflict management at Oryx Energy Company limited in Lusaka Province.

#### 4.2 Perception of the term conflict management

One of the key objectives of the study was to establish the perception of the term conflict management between employees and employers from selected profit making Organizations of Lusaka Province. This objective was guided by the research question: *What are the perceptions of the employees and employers of the term conflict management?*

#### 4.2.1 Responses from employees

When the question was asked regarding the perception of the term conflict management the employees responses were: *A way of managing disputes, resolving differences, employing strategies of handling conflicts, reducing conflicts, trying to resolve conflicts, sharing ideas, resolving misunderstandings, putting things under control, process where you try to resolve the dispute, process where parties in conflict try to harmonize, overcoming a conflict and reducing misunderstandings.*

**Table 1: Responses from employees by their understanding of the term conflict management**

Employees	Reponses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Managing disputes</li> <li>- Resolving differences</li> <li>- Employing strategies of handling conflicts</li> <li>- Resolving misunderstandings</li> <li>-Putting things under control</li> <li>- Process w here parties in conflict try to harmonize</li> <li>-Resolving misunderstandings</li> <li>-A way of putting things under control</li> <li>-Reducing conflict</li> <li>-How to resolve misunderstandings</li> <li>- Being able to resolve a conflict</li> <li>-Managing a conflict</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reducing misunderstandings</li> <li>-Resolving a conflict</li> <li>- A way of resolving misunderstandings</li> <li>- Trying to reduce a conflict</li> </ul>
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Table 1 shows responses from employees on their understanding of the term conflict management and some of the exact responses were “a way of resolving misunderstandings, managing a conflict, being able to resolve a conflict, resolving differences, a process where parties try to harmonize and a way of putting things under control.”

**4.2.3 Responses from the employer on the understanding of the term conflict management**

When the question was asked to the employers on the perception of the term conflict management, their responses were: *resolving issues or trying to agree with each other, how to anticipate possible ways of preventing conflicts, process of stopping a conflict from escalating, how to resolve misunderstandings, preventing conflicts from occurring and how to manage differences, a way of reducing conflicts, trying to resolve conflicts, sharing ideas, process where you try to resolve disputes, resolving misunderstandings, trying to reduce a conflict and overcoming a conflict.*

**Table 2: Responses from an employer on the understanding of the term conflict management**

Employers	Responses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Reducing conflicts</li> <li>-Trying to resolve conflicts</li> <li>-Sharing ideas</li> <li>- Process where you try to resolve the dispute</li> <li>-Resolving misunderstandings</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Overcoming a conflict</li> <li>- Resolving a conflict</li> <li>- Being able to resolve a conflict</li> <li>-A process of resolving misunderstandings</li> <li>- Resolving differences</li> <li>-Resolving a conflict</li> <li>-Resolving the misunderstandings</li> <li>-Misunderstanding each other</li> <li>-Trying to reduce a conflict</li> <li>-Resolving issues or trying to agree with each other</li> <li>-Misunderstanding between two parties</li> <li>-How to anticipate possible ways of preventing conflicts</li> <li>- Process of stopping a conflict from escalating</li> <li>- How to resolve misunderstandings</li> <li>-Preventing conflicts from occurring</li> <li>- How to manage differences</li> </ul>
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Table 2 shows responses from the employer on their understanding of the term conflict management and the exact responses were *“how to manage differences, how to resolve misunderstandings, preventing conflicts from occurring, how to anticipate possible ways of preventing conflicts and resolving issues or trying to agree with each other.”*

### **4.3 Causes of interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers**

Apart from establishing the perception of the term conflict management, the second research objective sought responses to the question: *what are the causes of interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers in selected profit-making Organizations in Lusaka Province?*

#### **4.3.1 Responses from employees on the causes of interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers**

The employees were of the view that conflicts were caused by many factors such as communication breakdown, responsibilities not being shared fairly, incompetent supervision, late coming, absence from work without a reason, an employer wanting to engage himself or herself into employees' affairs, unsatisfactory labour allocation, showing favoritism to some employees by management, laziness by employees and poor management strategies.

One of the employees asserted:

*Most of these conflicts are started by the employer; firstly, he does not lead by example and does not mind his own business.*

Another employee spoke of favoritism and stated:

*This employer likes some certain individuals who are always the ones to help out in the accounts department and the stores, not everyone is given a chance to work there.*

Similarly, another employee added:

*No matter what wrong things some employees do, the employer will not say anything and behave like nothing happened this is because some employees are his favorites. In the case of some of us, even a small issue tends to be blown out of proportion.*

**Table 3: Presentation of verbatim and other responses from employees on identifying the causes of conflict in the Organization**

Employees	Responses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Failure to lead by example</li> <li>-Favoritism</li> <li>-Sidelining</li> <li>-Failure to mind their own business</li> <li>-Miscommunication</li> <li>-Responsibilities are not shared fairly</li> <li>-Incompetent supervision</li> <li>-Passing offensive comments</li> <li>-Absence from work without a reason</li> <li>-Employer wanting to engage himself into employees affairs</li> <li>-Unsatisfactory labour allocation</li> <li>-Late coming for work</li> <li>-Laziness</li> <li>-Poor communication skills by management</li> <li>-Responsibilities not being shared equally</li> <li>-Showing favoritism to some employees by management</li> <li>-Poor channel of communication</li> <li>- Passing bad comments in meetings</li> </ul>

Table 3 shows verbatim and response from employees on the causes of interpersonal conflicts and the exact responses were *laziness of employees, late coming, communication break down between management and employees, favoritism, labour allocation is not fairly done and incompetent supervision, absenteeism and negative work culture.*

**Responses from the employer on the causes of interpersonal conflicts between Employees and Employers**

When an employer were asked on what causes conflicts between them and their Employees, their responses were: Employees not wanting to do the work as per schedule, Employees being lazy, Employees having negative work culture, failure to understand terms and conditions of service, poor work attitude by Employees, lack of communication and stubbornness as well as indiscipline’s of some employees.

An employer had the following to say regarding the causes of conflict between management and its employees. The employer noted:

*sometimes I over react when an employee does something wrong, instead of finding out for example why they have not been coming for work, I go straight to charging penalty on him or her.*

The responses are further tabulated in the following table as shown below.

**Table 4: Responses from an employer on the causes of conflicts between Employees and Employers**

Employer	Responses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Employees’ laziness</li> <li>-Bad work culture</li> <li>- Failure to understand terms and conditions of service</li> <li>-Poor work attitude by Employees</li> <li>-Excessive use of force when employee is wrong</li> <li>-Lack of communication</li> </ul>



Table 4 shows responses from Employers on the causes of interpersonal conflicts and some of the exact responses were “poor work attitude by Employees, excessive use of force when the employee is wrong, failure to understand the terms and conditions of service and employees being lazy.”

### **4.3 Effects of interpersonal conflicts between Employees and Employers**

The third objective of the study provided the researcher an opportunity to explore the effects of interpersonal conflicts between Employees and Employers. This was guided by the research question: *What are the effects of interpersonal conflicts between Employees and Employers?*

#### **4.4.1 Responses from Employees on the effects of interpersonal conflicts**

When the employees were asked about the effects of interpersonal conflicts they stated that effects of conflict were: performance of an employee tended to be low, stress and unhappy on the part of the employees, it brings about division in the organization, brings about tension hence work is not done, employees releases anger on customers, some employees are transferred, relationships are affected, less morale by employees, employees lose trust in management, employees are demotivated and it creates a poor working environment. To illustrate these effects further, some employees explained:

*These conflicts result in poor employee performance. I stopped going for work because of the boss, I was picked to go and conduct the national voter registration in central Province. This was a national duty. At that time our boss was not around so the supervisor knew and accepted, so I left. When the boss came back he commanded that I come back and threatened me if I didn't, so I came back and I was very bitter that I stopped doing a good job, if I was at work, I would just close the door and tell the others to keep quiet and I would be seated doing my own things till the knocking off hour.*

A similar view was held by another employee who explained:

*Employees get demotivated. Sometimes, you find that it is always the same employees who get to work on weekend for overtime allowance and promotion.*

Another employee stated:

*I don't have a good relationship with the boss; we seem not to agree with each other. What he wants is for us to follow what he says even if the employees do not feel it is right. I usually try to disagree with some of the practices in the organization especially during general meetings. The boss has labeled me as someone who always wants to oppose him; hence our relationship is not so good.*

Another employee expressed a different view and stated:

*I don't like being frustrated not especially by the boss; I try my best to work hard. If I am stressed or frustrated, I tend to release anger on the customers. I shout at them even when it is not necessary.*

**Table 5: presentation of other responses from Employees on the effects of interpersonal conflicts between Employees and Employers**

Category	Responses (Employees)
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It brings about division</li> <li>- Organization performance goes down</li> <li>- Brings about tension, hence work is not done</li> <li>- Employees releases anger on clients</li> <li>- Some Employees are transferred</li> <li>- Relationships are affected</li> <li>- Less morale by Employees</li> <li>- Poor work relationships</li> <li>- Employees loose trust in management</li> <li>- Employees are demotivated</li> <li>- Work is affected</li> <li>- Poor working environment</li> </ul>

Table 5 presents the other responses from Employees on the effects of interpersonal conflicts and the responses were *brings about hatred, relationships are broken, working environment is not conducive, employees are transferred, brings about de-motivation, tension and performance of employees is negatively affected.*

**4.4.3 Responses from the employer on the effects of interpersonal conflicts between Employees and Employers**

The study inquired from the employer on the effects of interpersonal conflicts with employees and the responses were: It brings about tension, clients lose out, Personal relations are affected, brings about aggression, if conflict is positive, there is an improvement in the delivery of service the work system is made perfect.

An employer pointed out to say:

*These conflicts do not always have negative effects, they at times bring about an improvement in the delivery of service and the work system is made perfect.*

**Table 6: Distribution of responses from an employer on the effects of interpersonal conflicts**

Employers	RESPONSES (Employers/manager)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-It brings about tension</li> <li>-Clients lose out</li> <li>-Personal relations are affected</li> <li>-Aggression</li> <li>-If conflict is positive, there is an improvement in the delivery of service</li> <li>-The work system is made perfect</li> <li>-Employees are demotivated</li> </ul>

Table 6 shows responses from the employer on the effects of interpersonal conflicts and the exact responses were *personal relations are affected, brings about aggression and Employees get demotivated.*” A manager at Oryx pointed out: *“conflicts do not only have negative effects, at times it brings out positive ones such as an improvement in the delivery of service and the work system is made perfect.*

#### 4.4 challenges faced in conflict management between employers and employees.

The fourth objective of the study provided the researcher an opportunity to establish the challenges that are faced by both employers and employees in the management of interpersonal conflicts between Employees and Employers at Oryx. This was guided by the research question: *What are the challenges faced by both employers and employees in conflict management between Employees and Employers?*

##### 4.4.1 Responses from Employees on the challenges faced in conflict management between employers and employees.

On the question to finding out the challenges that are faced in conflict management from employees, mostly but not all, said the following: inability to read the lay down rules and codes of ethics, employers not taking the matter seriously, no external support from unions and ministry of labour and fear of other members thereby making it difficult to protest in few numbers.

**Table 7: Responses from Employees on the challenges faced in conflict management between employers and employees**

Employees	Responses
	-Inability to read the lay down rules and codes of conduct -Employers not taking the matter serious -No external support from unions and labour offices -Fear

Table 7 above shows responses from employees on the challenges faced in conflict management and their responses were: inability to read the lay down rules and codes of ethics, employers not taking the matter seriously, no external support from unions and ministry of labour and fear of other members.

**4.4.2 Responses from an employer on the challenges faced in conflict management between employers and employees**

When the question on the challenges faced by management in conflict management was posed on the employer who happens to be the manager, they only pointed out three challenges and said that beyond these three, there were no other challenges. These challenges according to them were that mostly management did not currently have a policy formulated on conflict management and resolutions. They said that if it was there then it would be an out dated one. Secondly they indicated that there is no clear environment where conflict resolution strategies can be held from. And lastly they said that the ministry of labour had not taken its position to assist much on the challenges of conflicts that the organization faced thereby carrying out outdated techniques and strategies when handling conflicts in some instances. These responses are tabulated as below.

**Table 8. Responses from the employer on the challenges faced in conflict management between employers and employees**

Employer	Responses
	-Lack of policy on conflict management -Lack of proper conflict resolution environment for conflict management -Lack of assistance and support from the ministry of labour

Table 8 shows responses from the employer on the challenges faced in conflict management and her responses were that management did not currently had a policy formulated on conflict management and resolutions. She said that if it was there then it would be an out dated one. Secondly she indicated that there is no clear environment where conflict resolution strategies can be held from. And lastly she said that the ministry of labour has not taken its position to assist much on the challenges of conflicts that her organization faces thereby carrying out outdated techniques and strategies when handling conflicts in some instances.

## 4.2 Management strategies used to resolve conflicts

The fifth objective of the study enabled the researcher to determine the conflict management strategies used when managing interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers. This was guided by the main research question: *what management strategies are used to manage interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers?*

### 4.2.1 Responses from employees on the strategies used to manage interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers.

When the employees were asked on the strategies that are used to manage conflicts between them and their employers they stated strategies such as dialogue, communication and avoiding conflicts, confrontation and mediation. These strategies are shown in the table below

**Table 9: Responses from employees on what strategies are used to manage interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers**

Employees	Responses
	- Avoidance - Dialogue - Communication - Confrontation - Mediation

Table 9 shows responses from employees on management strategies used to manage interpersonal conflicts and the exact responses were: dialogue, communication and avoiding conflicts, confrontation and mediation.

### 4.5.2 Responses from employees on the most effective strategies used to manage interpersonal conflicts between employers and employees.

After stating the strategies used, the employees were required to highlight the most effective ones. This was guided by the research question: *What did the parties to conflict consider to be the most*

*effective conflict management strategies used to resolve interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers at Oryx Energy Company limited in Lusaka?*

The employees pointed out dialogue, mediation and communication as the most effective conflict management strategy used to manage interpersonal conflicts between them and their employer. The employees further emphasised that the employer and other staff in management should go for conflict management courses in order to gain knowledge on conflicts and how to manage them.

One employee stated:

*When you are in conflict with another person, it is better for the two of you to sit together, try to understand each other and resolve the conflict. I was in conflict with the boss over my constant late coming for work. It was only through dialogue that she got to understand my situation and the conflict was managed.*

**4.5.3 Responses from the employer on the strategies used to manage interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers.**

The employer from Oryx however outlined different management strategies such as: charging a penalty to employees, confrontation, and rebuke at the employees, mediation, dialogue and Collaboration. These responses have been shown in the table below.

**Table 10 Distribution of responses from the employer on what management strategies are used to manage interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers**

Employer	Responses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Confrontation</li> <li>-Dialogue</li> <li>-Mediation</li> <li>-Collaboration</li> <li>-Charging penalty</li> <li>-Rebuke</li> </ul>

Table 10 shows responses from the employer on what management strategies are used to manage interpersonal conflicts and the exact responses were mediation, confrontation, dialogue, rebuking at the employee, charging the employee and collaboration, charging penalty and rebuke.

#### **4.5.4 Responses from the employer on the most effective strategies used to manage interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers.**

The employer had to give the most effective strategies used as this is in line with there search question: *What did the parties to conflict consider to be the most effective conflict management strategies used to resolve interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers at Oryx Energy Company limited in Lusaka Province?* When asked on the most effective conflict management strategies used the employer preferred to using dialogue and collaboration.

#### **4.6 Summary**

This Chapter has presented the results of the study on management strategies of interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers in Lusaka Province. The results were presented in line with the five research questions set out in Chapter One. The next chapter will discuss the findings of the study.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION, SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

The previous Chapter presented the results on management strategies of interpersonal conflicts between Employees and Employers. The results were presented in line with the six objectives set out in Chapter One of this research.

This Chapter discusses the findings in Chapter Four by relating them to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two in the light of the five objectives of this study. It also intends to give a precise summary of the research, its conclusion and accepted recommendations. The major findings are discussed under five headings derived from the research questions. This is however meant to provide sufficient answers to the five objectives and realize the purpose of this study.

#### 5.2 Discussion

##### **Perception of the term conflict management**

In order to establish the perception of the term conflict management, respondents who were employees and an employer were asked as to what they understood by the term conflict management.

##### **Responses from employees on the perception of the term conflict management**

The study revealed that the employees understood what the term conflict management meant. Their definitions were: ways of resolving misunderstandings, process where parties in conflict try to harmonize, resolving conflict and finding a solution to a misunderstanding. These definitions are in line with the definition by (De Bono, 1985) who defines conflict management as an attempt to resolve a conflict between two conflict parties. This is the definition that this study has used.

From the above definitions of the term conflict management given by the employees, it was noted that they understood the term well and this made it easy for the researcher to carry on and ask further questions.

### **Responses from the employer on the perception of the term conflict management**

Equally, the employer was asked about what she understood by the term conflict management and it was found that the employer understood the meaning. The exact definitions were: how to anticipate possible ways of preventing conflicts, how to resolve misunderstandings between two parties, how to manage differences, process of stopping a conflict from escalating and resolving issues or trying to agree with each other. These definitions are in line with those given by the employees as well as the definition by De Bono, 1985 which states that conflict management is an attempt to resolve a conflict between two conflict parties. This is the definition that has been used in this study.

There is evidence from the above definitions that the employer understood the meaning of the term conflict management which made it easier for the researcher to go with the interview.

### **Conflict management strategies used and the most effective ones**

The existence and prevalence of such conflicts and their traumatic effects cannot be ignored. It needs to be controlled and resolved because, when this mutual hostility is not resolved, the effect is disharmony and the absence of peace. Managing is an act of finding a solution to problems or a conflict, (Sompa, 2015). Conflict management strategy, therefore, is a method desired to develop peaceful means of amicably ending a state of conflict (Burton, 1990).

### **Responses from employees on the strategies used when managing interpersonal conflicts between employees and Employers**

The most effective management strategies as highlighted by the Employees were: communication, dialogue and mediation, avoidance, confrontation and collaboration are other strategies used and are considered effective.

Literature reviewed by Ndlovu (2006), stated avoidance as one of the management strategies used. He further stated that the avoiding strategy refers to low assertiveness and low cooperation. Many times people will avoid conflicts out of fear of engaging in a conflict or because they do not have confidence in their conflict management skills. Times when the avoiding mode is appropriate are when you have issues of low importance, to reduce tension, to buy some time, or when you are in a position of lower power. In a related research by Abdul (2013), he gave avoidance as one of the

strategies used to manage conflicts between Employees and Employers. The strategy identified by Meyer (1994), was effective communication, which he described as the best because it would make the parties in conflict aware of the kind of communication, which could lead to problem solving. This is in line with responses from the Employees. However, the Employees identified dialogue as the best possible conflict management strategy that was used and should be used to manage interpersonal conflicts between Employees and Employers.

There is therefore need to use the right conflict management strategy to manage conflicts as there are a variety of them. This will help to manage conflicts effectively so that they do not occur over again.

### **Responses from employers on the strategies used when managing interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers**

The study further revealed responses from the Employers on how conflicts between them and their Employees are managed. The Employers in an interview outlined a number of these strategies and these are: dialogue, charging the employee with penalty, confrontation, collaboration, rebuke and mediation.

These findings are in line with many other studies which show the types of management strategies used to resolve conflicts between Employees and Employers as well as the most effective ones.

The strategy that the Employers find to be most effective is dialogue; this is in line with a study by Dzurgha (2006), who noted that conflicts could be settled through dialogue, meaning to engage in the exchange of views and ideas between the parties in conflict. Likewise, Oyebade (1995) identified certain strategies as important in resolving conflict such as dialogue, Miller (2003), saw mediation as the intervention of a third party. The objective is to help parties to a conflict within an environment of controlled communities to reach a solution to their problems. Umstot (1987) listed four styles that could be used to manage or resolve conflicts as: avoiding, accommodating, compromising, and collaborating.

Umstot also contended that when choosing a conflict resolution strategy, the first decision to make is whether to confront or avoid the conflict or not. According to him, there are times when conflict arises and one would want to put off acting upon it. A research by Tosi, (1986), suggested four ways of managing conflicts, namely competition, collaboration, compromise, avoidance or

accommodation. The strategy identified by Meyer (1994), was effective communication which he described as the best because it would make the parties in conflict aware of the kind of communication which could lead to problem solving.

Makaye (2012) argued that confrontation is one of the techniques that have been used to address conflicts in profit making Organizations. Confrontation can involve collaboration and compromise. It is done in the hope that the parties in conflict are ready to face each other amicably, and entails intercession, bargaining, negotiation, mediation, attribution and application of the integrative decision making method, which is a collaborative style based on the premise that there is a solution which can be accepted by both parties. It involves a process of defining the problem, searching for alternatives and their evaluation, and deciding by consensus.

The Employer brought out new conflict management strategies such as charging the Employees and rebuking at them. This is meant to instill fear in the employee and as a way of punishing the employees.

It should however be noted that, being the manager of the Organization, employer should be able to employ different management strategies in the organization in order to manage conflicts between themselves and the Employees such as improving organizational practices and this could be done through reducing vagueness, minimizing authority and domain-related disputes, improving policies, procedures and rules, re-apportioning existing resources or adding new ones and changing reward systems, (Sompa, 2015).

### **Causes of interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers**

There is consensus in literature that conflict is an ever-present reality in human relations, and there is no known institution that is exempted from it. This has been stated by Loomis and Loomis (1965). The causes of interpersonal conflicts between Employees and employers have been discussed below.

### **Responses from employees on the causes of interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers**

The study found that there were several causes of interpersonal conflicts which could be broadly categorized as communication breakdown and ethical misconduct. Ethical misconduct included

instances such as constant absenteeism from work, favoritism of some Employees by the employers, incompetence of the employers, constant late coming, and use of vulgar language. Communication breakdown was noted in instances such as Employees being reminded constantly on what they were supposed to do, labour allocations are not fairly done and responsibilities not being shared equally.

Incompetence of the employer has been supported by a study done by Yee and Cuba (1996), which stated that Employers were unable to adopt and respond to complexities in their Organization fast, hence, Employees got impatient because they expected quick positive change, and when change failed to occur that fast, the employer was accused of being a low performer. Rono (2001) shares the above views and indicates that some Employers display poor leadership qualities that create conflicts between them and their Employees in Organizations.

The findings of the Republic of Kenya (2001) further support the incompetence of Employers as a cause of conflict between them and their Employees as they indicate that Employers create conflicts in their Organization because of applying wrong managerial skills in planning, budgeting and expenditure control. In some cases, Employers do not apply proper use of accounting instructions provided by the Organization. This leads to misallocation of resources resulting in lack of essential commodities and services hence causing conflict.

Favoritism of some Employees by the employer is another cause of conflict and has been supported by Omboko (2010), in Nigeria, where he reveals that Employers sometimes find themselves in conflict with Employees due to favouring of some Employees.

It should however be noted that causes such as labour not being allocated fairly, the use of vulgar language were not cited in the literature reviewed from other countries. These were entirely new causes unique to the study site. Therefore, this study has added to literature on what causes conflicts between Employees and Employers.

It is evident from the foregoing that Employees and Employers have conflicts which have remained unsettled over time, this, however creates anxiety and stress which further intensifies existing conflicts. There is therefore need for the Employees and Employers to try and avoid conflicts at all cost.

### **Responses from employers on the causes of interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers**

Similarly, the Employers were asked to give their views of some of the causes of interpersonal conflicts between Employees and Employers and Responses included negative work culture, absconding work, lack of communication between management and the Employees, excessive use of force when employees are wrong, not doing the work on time, failure to understand terms and conditions of service. These responses still fall under the two ethical misconduct and communication breakdown.

Lack of communication has been supported by a study done by Rono (2001), who indicates that some Employers display poor leadership qualities that create conflicts between them and their Employees in the organizations. However, most of these causes were not cited in literature reviewed from other countries, causes such as excessive use of force by the employers when the employee was wrong, not doing the work on time, absconding from work, failure to understand terms and conditions of service among others.

The many causes cited by the Employers confirmed that they had poor leadership qualities as they failed to compel Employees to do what they were supposed to do at the right time. As a result, conflicts keep on occurring in the Organization.

### **Effects of interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers**

The study explored a number of effects of interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers. Major ones among them included: poor work relations among staff, employee transfers, it brings about frustrations, poor job performance and poor organization performance.

### **Responses from employees on the effects of interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers**

The Employees were asked to give their opinion on the effects of interpersonal conflicts between them and their Employers. The following were the effects that most of them cited: Employees get demotivated, poor work relations among staff, employee transfers, it brings about frustrations, poor job performance and poor organization performance, employee releases anger on clients, brings about tension and hatred making the Organization environment not conducive for working.

A research by Omboko (2006), in Nigeria found that conflicts between employees and employers end up having either of them being sacked.

(Kirchoff and Adams, 1982) also pointed out frustration and demotivation as one of the destructive effects of conflicts. They further included stress, it brings about hostility, results in impaired or bad judgment, restricts freedom, it also influences other workers negatively, results in lack of confidence in the principal or administrator and lastly but not the least, it detracts from the attainment of goals and objectives.

Contributing to the adverse effects of conflict, Eccles and Irene (1995), assert that conflict between employees and employers can lead to outright hostile or aggressive behaviour. They explain that in some cases, the frustrated individual may show direct aggression against the other individual perceived to be the cause of the conflict. In other instances, Dodge (1962), says that aggression may be displaced towards a person who is not directly involved in the situation.

It should however be noted that poor job performance and poor employee performance were not indicated as effects of conflicts between employees and employers in the literature review, so this research has brought out new findings on the effects of interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers.

The effects of interpersonal conflict between employees and employers influence other employees negatively. It was observed that these effects cause detraction from the attainment of goals and objectives in the organization by both the employees and those in management.

### **Responses from the employer on the effects of interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers**

The employer was asked for their views on the effects of interpersonal conflicts between them and their employees. Their views were in line with those given by the employees. These views included; poor job results, brings about aggression and tension, affects personal relationships between and among employees as well as employers, customers lose out and employees get demotivated. However, the employer pointed out that conflict did not always have negative effects; they also had a positive side to them. They at times brought about an improvement in the delivery of service and the work system would be made perfect.

Nevertheless, it can be underscored that the findings brought out by this research showed both the negative and positive effects of conflicts, as was the study by Filley (1975), in which he outlined

some positive effects of conflicts. He states that, when two parties who respect each other face a conflicting situation, the conflict resolution process may help in clarifying the facts and stimulating a search for mutually acceptable solutions. He further noted that the performance and cohesion of each party is likely to improve. In a conflict situation, an opponent's position is evaluated negatively, and group allegiance is strongly reinforced, leading to increased group effort and cohesion. Another positive effect of conflict is that the relative ability or power of the parties involved can be identified and measured.

Filley (1975) stated some negative effects of conflicts between the employees and the employers which often result in polarization of the organization or Company, those supporting the management and those on the side of the employees. No institution can function effectively or achieve its goals if the individuals are polarized and working against each other. Any conflict situation is bound to inhibit the smooth running of the institutions and by extension its overall performance.

However, despite the interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers having positive effects, the negative effects overshadow the positive ones. This in turn reduces the commitment of employees, managers as well as the customers and at the end of it all, the whole purpose of the organization is defeated.

### **5.3 Summary**

In this academic exercise, a case study design was adopted in the quest to make the study a success. Its main aim was to assess the various interpersonal conflict management strategies used between employers and employees at Oryx Energy Company limited, a profit making organization in Lusaka district of Zambia, and the main purpose that led to carrying out this huge academic exercise was to assess the strategies used in resolving conflicts and establish a new report on the usefulness and effectiveness of the said strategies in conflict resolution exercise in organizations and companies and, perhaps, provide necessary information to policy makers and other stakeholder of the best strategies to adopt in resolving interpersonal conflicts which has been going on in most profit making organizations. In order to make this a reality, the following were the proposed research questions that helped the researcher:



1. What are the perceptions of employers and employees of the term conflict management at Oryx Energy Company Limited?
2. What strategies do employers use to manage conflict at Oryx Energy Company limited?
3. What are the causes of interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers at Oryx Energy Company limited?
4. What are the effects of interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers at Oryx Energy Company limited?
5. What are some of the challenges faced in the management of conflict at Oryx Energy Company limited?

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to assess the management strategies used to address interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers in profit making Organizations in Lusaka and specifically at Oryx Energies. The study further sought to establish the strategies used in by employers at Oryx Energies Organization limited in conflict management, identify the causes of interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers, explore their effects and challenges faced in conflict management.

The study showed that the respondents understood the term conflict management as ways used to resolve a conflict between two conflicting parties. Causes of the interpersonal conflicts between the employees and the employers were said to be incompetence of the employers, absenteeism, late coming for work by employees, not doing work on time, unsatisfactory labour allocation, favouritism of some employees by the employer, employees having a negative work culture, use of poor management strategies, lack of communication between management and employees, poor management of Organizations by the employers and employees having higher qualifications than the employers in some cases.

The effects of the interpersonal conflicts were said to be: demotivation of employees, poor work relations among staff, employee transfers, bringing about frustrations, poor job performance and poor organization performance, employee releases anger on clients, brings about tension and

hatred making the Organization environment not conducive for working and bringing about division among members of staff.

Challenges mostly faced by employees and employers have also said to be: Lack of policy on conflict management, lack of proper conflict resolution environment for conflict management, lack of assistance and support from the ministry of labour as stated by the employer. Furthermore, employees also indicated the following: inability to read the lay down rules and codes of ethics, employers not taking the matter seriously, no external support from unions and ministry of labour and fear of other members thereby making it difficult to protest in large numbers

Different management strategies are however being used to manage interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers and these are: dialogue, rebuke at an employee, communication, avoidance, confrontation, policy, collaboration, mediation and charging penalties to employees.

After a careful analysis of the findings in the light of the study objectives, the researcher is of the view that conflicts between the employees and employers will continue to exist if they are not managed effectively, a number of management strategies cited in the literature and have worked elsewhere are not being used in the sampled Organization which include the following:

1. The compromising style.
2. The use of strategies such as non-attention, physical separation and limited interaction, creating a super-ordinate goal, use of the smoothing, integrating and obliging styles.
3. Designing economic incentives that all employees can benefit from as well as providing meaningful feedback in a constructive manner on a regular basis.
4. The use of structural changes which occur when the Organizations changes how it functions or operates. Structural changes can alter past trends or theories on how the Organizations are run.

It was also clear from the study that there was no use of job rotation, the employees and employers lacked commitment to the management of productive conflict, in order to ensure that conflict did not become destructive.

## **5.5 Recommendations**

In the light of the major findings above, the following recommendations are being proposed on how conflicts between the employees and employers could be managed effectively.

### **Perceptions of the term conflict management strategies**

- a) The labour experts and labour authorities in the Ministry of labour should hold seminars that will include a training course on management of conflicts in the Organizations to educate employers and employees on various conflict management programs. This will enable the employees and employers to use different techniques of conflict management so that they will apply the appropriate ones when the need arises.

### **Management strategies used to manage conflict and the most effective ones**

- b) It is further recommended that employers should also be encouraged to adopt a compromising style for conflict management as well as the use of strategies such as no attention, physical separation and limited interaction,
- c) The managers should organize seminars and workshops aimed at improving rapport between employees and their staff and building good working relations between them. They should also organize workshops for themselves when appropriate to enable them acquire or improve their leadership skills and conflict resolution strategies so as to improve their managerial effectiveness. The facilitators of the workshops should do follow ups to ensure that whatever they have imparted are being implemented.

### **Causes of interpersonal conflict**

- d) The Ministry of labour should form conflict resolution teams in the provinces to assist Organizations adopt existing official conflict resolution strategies for resolving conflict in Organizations before it adversely affects productivity and consequently, avoid any future causes.

### **Effects of interpersonal conflict**

- e) Employees and the Organizations managers should be made aware of the long and short term negative effects of conflict on organization productivity. This can be done through discussions. In this regard, employers should be vigilant and effectively monitor employees at work.

### **General**

- f) These findings would be made available to the Ministry of labour and extracts published to make the information available to Organizations and the general public to learn from.
- g) Interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers in Organizations in Zambia would be managed better depending on how fast and effectively the above recommendations are put into place. Without such measures of managing interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers, conflicts between them will continue to exist and affect the smooth running of the Organizations.

### **6.4 Suggestions for further research**

The field of conflict management is still a virgin area for research in relation to Zambian Organizations. As such, this study on management strategies of interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers in profit making Organizations in Zambia is by no means exhaustive. Further research may therefore be conducted on the following topic because conflict is also believed to emanate from home to the outside so it is important to establish measures or strategies used in homes first:

1. Conflicts management strategies in household set up and its effects to the outside relations:  
A case of Lusaka District or other districts.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

#### EMPLOYEES

#### MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES OF INTERPERSONAL CONFLICTS BETWEEN EMPLOYEES AND EMPLOYERS

Good morning, my name is SamananaKapashi. I am very pleased you have agreed to meet me today.

We are here to talk about an assessment of management strategies of interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers. The discussion we are going to have is called a focus group. For those of you who have never participated in one of these sessions, I would like to explain a little bit about this type of research.

Focus groups are used to gather information informally from a small group of individuals who have a common interest in a particular subject. In focus groups, there are no rights or wrong answers; I would like to hear from everyone in the room.

I am pleased you can be part of this group because I think you have important ideas regarding the management strategies of interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers. Don't hesitate to speak up when you have a point you would like to make.

I will record this discussion as well as take notes. I like to follow what is being said and then go back later to review what you said again so I can accurately convey your ideas and opinions.

Question one: What do you understand by the term conflict? \_\_\_\_\_

Question two: What do you understand by the term conflict management? \_\_\_\_\_

Question three: How would you describe relations between employees and management in the Organization? \_\_\_\_\_

Question four: Have there been cases of conflict in the Organization? \_\_\_\_\_

Question five: Between which officers does conflict occur in your Organization?

\_\_\_\_\_

Question six: What are some of the common causes of interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers in your Organization? \_\_\_\_\_

Question seven: What are some of the effects of interpersonal conflicts between employees and employers in your Organization? \_\_\_\_\_

Question eight: What interpersonal conflict management strategies are used to manage conflicts between employees and employers? \_\_\_\_\_

Question nine: What are the most effective interpersonal conflict management strategies used when resolving conflicts between employees and employers? \_\_\_\_\_

Question ten: Please give two encounters (conflict case) you have had/you know of with the employer and the employees. \_\_\_\_\_

Question eleven: Were these conflicts resolved to your satisfaction? State reasons; \_\_\_\_\_

Question twelve: Suggest strategies which you believe would resolve conflicts between employees and employers better. \_\_\_\_\_

Question thirteen: Have you had any opportunity to attend Courses in Conflict Management? \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

### Interview guide (employer)

1. How are relations among staff in this Organization? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How about between employees and customers? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How would you describe relations between you and your employees in the Organization? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What do you understand by the term conflict? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What do you understand by the term conflict management? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What are the causes of interpersonal conflicts between employees and your office in your Organization? \_\_\_\_\_
7. State the common types of conflicts that have happened between your office and employees in your Organization. \_\_\_\_\_
8. What are the effects of interpersonal conflicts between employees and your office in your Organization? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What interpersonal conflict management strategies have you used with your employees? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Which interpersonal conflict management strategies that have been used when resolving conflicts between employees and your office have you found most effective? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Please give two encounters (conflict case) you have had with employees. \_\_\_\_\_
12. How did you resolve these? \_\_\_\_\_
13. What is the frequency of occurrence of conflict between you and the employees in your Organization? \_\_\_\_\_
14. Have you had any opportunity to attend Courses in Conflict Management? \_\_\_\_\_
15. Do you record any of these conflict experiences with employees in any document?  
\_\_\_\_\_
16. What are some of the challenges you face in conflict management in your Organization?  
\_\_\_\_\_