EFFECTS OF DISPUTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES OF COMMODITY MARKET ASSOCIATION ON ITS MEMBERS IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA: A QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT

The paper quantitatively assessed dispute management strategies employed by commodity market associations and their impact on members in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of essential resolution mechanisms. The methodology will involve a comprehensive survey, through questionnaires, administered to members of commodity market associations across selected regions in Kwara State. The survey instrument will capture quantitative data on the prevalence of disputes, the types of conflicts encountered, and the strategies implemented for resolution. Additionally, demographic information, such as members' tenure and engagement level in the association, will be collected to identify potential correlations between these variables and the success of dispute management strategies. The research will employ statistical analyses to examine the frequency and nature of disputes within commodity market associations, providing insights into the most common sources of conflicts. Furthermore, the study will assess the utilisation and effectiveness of various dispute resolution tools, such as mediation, arbitration, and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. By employing quantitative metrics, the research aims to identify patterns and trends that can inform the refinement of dispute management strategies. The anticipated outcomes include a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of current dispute management approaches within commodity market associations in Kwara State. The research findings will contribute to developing evidence-based recommendations for improving existing strategies or implementing new ones. Additionally, the study will provide valuable insights for policymakers, association leaders, and other stakeholders seeking to enhance the peaceful co-existence of members within commodity market associations.

Keywords: Dispute Management Strategies, Commodity Market Associations, Qualitative Assessment, Member Perspectives, Kwara State

Introduction

Markets are meeting points for diverse social groups of commodity traders and between traders and their customers. Markets, advertently, function as platforms for price determination where buyers and sellers come together and determine the price of goods and services through the forces of supply and demand (Casson, and Lee, 2011; Jan, et al., 2021). Markets allocate resources by allowing businesses to produce the goods and services that are in high demand while reducing production of those that are not, thus, ensuring that resources are used efficiently. Markets also transmit information to buyers and sellers about the availability and prices of goods and services in the market. Such information allows traders to make informed decisions about what to produce, how much to produce, and at what price to sell (Iyobiyi, 2014; Amadeo, 2021).

In Nigeria, trade disputes come in different forms and nature, and exist in diverse areas of marketing activities. For instance, in Ketu/mile 12 Market, Lagos State, the dispute is triggered by *la'ada (*rent or commission) collected by Hausa/Fulani in the market. Some argue that being non-indigenes, (Hausa/Fulani) they had no right to collect *la'ada* in Lagos. They argue further that the practice was alien to Yoruba culture and that it came into being during the military era when some Hausa/Fulani military administrators were posted to Lagos State. While in Bodija market, Oyo State, the inter-ethnic conflict between the Hausa cattle traders and the Yoruba marketers started from a dispute between a goat trader and some market women over a breach of contract in the sale of goat meat. In the case of perishable commodities such as livestock and vegetables, issues around transport, i.e. vehicle breaking down, damage to goods in transit, delays in reaching markets etc, have resulted in disputes several times between transporters and the traders in Ogbomosho, Owode Oja and Lafenwa markets in Oyo and Ogun State respectively (Porter, et al, 2010 & Iyoboyi, 2014).

In similar terms, conflict management strategies in market place involve dialogue, mediation, negotiation, reconciliation, suppression and sometimes, the use of force (Yusuf and Ibrahim, 2019). All these strategies are designed to ensure buying and selling of commodities

are not disrupted or altered. As such, in Nigeria, dialogue has been the effort put in place to resolve disputes among indigene and non-indigene commodity traders. Also, the Regional Office of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) usually mediate between transport workers and traders that have misunderstandings. Efforts of the Market Chief better known as *Sarikin Kasuwa* or *Baba Loja* in the North and Southwest markets places respectively cannot be emphasized in reconciliations and mediating disputes in their respective marketplaces (Porter, et al, 2010).

Objective/Structure

This study aims to appraise the dispute management strategies of Commodity Market Associations (CMAs) in selected commodity markets and their effects on peaceful co-existence among members in Kwara State, Nigeria. It is to examine the causes of trade disputes among commodity market traders in Kwara State and identify the conflict management mechanisms involved in dispute resolution among commodity market traders in Kwara State. It will finally explore the effectiveness of the mechanisms for managing disputes among commodity market traders in Kwara State. To achieve these broad objectives, the paper is divided into sections, starting from the introduction down to the conclusion and recommendation.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative method, with the help of a questionnaire, to achieve the stated objectives. The population for this study is estimated to be Thirteen Thousand Two Hundred and Fifty-Nine (13,259) market traders in all the registered marketplaces in Kwara State (Kwara State Bureau of Statistics and Ministry of Commerce, 2022). However, the targeted population would consist of men and women commodity traders in some selected registered marketplaces in the three senatorial districts of the State, heads of the market union and security agents (NSCDC/POLICE) stationed at those marketplaces.

For this study, purposive sampling method is adopted in selecting two marketplaces in each of the senatorial district of the State, namely, Gbugbu International market and Kaima

market both in Edu and Kaima LGAs of Kwara North Senatorial district; Owode Market and Kara Ajase both in Offa and Irepodun LGAs of Kwara South Senatorial district; and Ipata and Mandate market in Ilorin East and West LGAs of Kwara Central Senatorial district. A Thousand Three Hundred Twenty-Six (1,326) respondents which represent ten per cent (10%) of the estimated Thirteen Thousand Two Hundred Hundred Fifty-Nine (13,259) study population were considered as the sample size in the six purposively selected commodity marketplaces across the State. Also, this sample size of 1,326, includes other relevant stakeholders, i.e. security agents and market union leaders in each of the markets. Invariably Two Hundred and Twenty-One respondents (221) in each of the six designated markets are served a questionnaire. Due to some constraints, the study will make use of a total number of Nine Hundred and Forty-Two (942), representing 71% of the total sample size, duly answered and returned questionnaires for its data analysis and results.

The questionnaire consisted of five sections to satisfy the research questions and objectives of the study. Section A is concerned with the bio/demographical data of the respondents, whereas Sections B – E contain items constructed to elicit information from the respondents. Respondents are required to make choices from four (4) options on the Likert's scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was subjected to split-half to ensure its reliability and validity where a reliability of 0.71 was established.

Conceptual Discourse and Literature Review

Dispute Management Strategies

It is obvious that conflict is an unavoidable reality of living; but, while one may recognize this, it still does not negate the fact that conflict is difficult to define (Bsech, 2017). It is often viewed much differently today than it was a few decades ago. Conflict is seen as opposition among social entities directed against one another. Doss, (2021) asserts that conflict is an opposition among social entities independently striving for something of which the resources are inadequate to satisfy all. Competitors may not be aware of one another, while they are

parties to a conflict. Conflict has also been viewed as "a relationship between two or more parties who believe they have incompatible goals", "a situation in which two or more human beings desire goals which they perceived as being obtainable by one or the other, but not by both while each party is mobilising energy to obtain a goal, a desired object or situation, and each party perceives the other as a barrier or treat to that goal"; and, "an incompatible behaviour between parties whose interests are or appear to be, incompatible or clashing" (Bösch, 2017; Sidorenkov, Borokhovski and Kovalenko, 2018; Yusuf and Ibrahim, 2019; Doss, 2021).

Certo (1997) classifies these handling conflict-handling styles as *Comprise, Avoiding and Smoothing, Forcing a Solution, and Confrontation or Problem-Solving,* while Robbins, DeCenzo and Coulter (2007) identify them as *Avoidance, Accommodation, Forcing, Compromise and Collaboration*. Rahim (2002) mentions five conflict-handling styles *Integrating, Obliging, Dominating, Avoiding, and Compromising"*. He had earlier categorized these styles as "concern for self and concern for others" (Rahim, 1983). This study explains some of the aforementioned conflict handling styles for essential clarifications as follows:

i. **Avoidance**: It is also known as *conflict avoidance strategy*. In this strategy, a party sometimes thinks that conflict is bad, unnecessary or harmful for its own, so this party avoids coming into conflict (Certo, 1997). The reaction of such a party may be to withdraw when it realizes there may be conflict. This part shows indifference or behaves as if the conflict is not important, and it hides its idea (Robbins, 1991). Avoiding is suitable when conflict is not important for one party which does not have to make a decision, and the issue does not affect this party very much (Certo, 1997; Rahim, 2002). However, this strategy is unfitting when one party which has to decide about a conflict issue avoids discussion. It is often said that any organization that adopts this method will be sitting on a keg of gunpowder and also postponing the evil day.

ii. **Compromise**: In this strategy, the parties involved are willing to settle the conflict matter amicably without seeing anyone as a winner or vanquished. As a result of this conflict

management strategy, there is no winning or losing party. Both sides gain some advantages but not all of them and they have to give up something. Thus, they share the conflict objectives (Robbins, 1991). According to Certo (1997), "Compromising means that the parties to the conflict settle on a solution that gives both of them part of what they wanted. No party gets exactly what it wanted, but neither loses entirely either." Therefore, Compromising is appropriate when the objectives are not as important as the efforts and time which are spent during conflict; both parties have an equal amount of power, but they attribute to different objectives; it is necessary to find a temporary solution to critical issues; the parties do not have enough time to discuss any more and they have to make a decision immediately; and when collaboration or obliging is impossible, compromise can be alternative (Robbins, 1991).

iii. **Accommodation**: In this strategy, opposing issues are neglected and common points are emphasized. One party gives up its desires to meet the needs of the other party. This involves the tactics adopted to neutralize the root cause of the conflict and to ensure that all distressed members are pacified to be on the same page. This strategy is appropriate when one part doesn't have enough information about the topic and the relationship between both parts wanted to be maintained (Rahim, 2002). Also, the strategy is appropriate when there is a need for a stop-gap to be put in place or when the members have a mutually significant goal.

iv. **Integration:** Robbins, DeCenzo and Coulter (2007) define integration with some phrases which are, 'open and honest discussion', 'intensive listening', 'to understand differences', and 'mutual agreement'. Moreover, it has been described as an effective problem-solving strategy (Rahim, 2002). This approach is also cited as collaboration whose primary aim is to meet the needs of two parties, and as such the satisfaction of both sides is provided (Robbins, DeCenzo and Coulter, 2007). Integration is a suitable strategy when there is a complex problem, or one party cannot solve this problem on its own, whereas the two opposing parties try to achieve a common solution by exchanging ideas, knowledge, suggestions and choices (Rahim, 2002).

v. **Domination:** Generally, this approach is evident when one party has more power or formal authority (Robbins, 1991; Certo, 1997) and the effect of the conflict is not thought, but

achievement of aims and gaining more advantages are taken into consideration (Robbins, 1991). One party neglects the needs and satisfaction of the other party and gives importance to only its own goals to win position (Rahim, 2002). This strategy is not suitable when the issue involved in the conflict is complex and there is not enough time to make a good decision or when both parties have equal power because this style will lead to stalemate (Rahim, 2002).

Commodity Market Traders and Dispute Management

According to Ojo, (2016), the use of dialogue in market dispute management helped reducing fear, suspicion and prejudice which eventually made the traders move closer to each other and understand each other better. It also facilitated peace, stability, economic prosperity, and unity in the market. Adoption of dialogue and showcasing diplomatic relations had, from time immemorial, prevented and resolved conflicts between trader versus trader, trader versus customer and trader versus market authority. Indeed, dialogue breaks barriers created by differences in ideology, language, culture, ideas and opinions. The traders, in contemporary times, continue and observe some of the traditional values, laws and norms in the markets for the development and peaceful co-existence in the markets.

Mediation

Mediation was an old method of conflict resolution and an art of intervening in a conflicting situation. It involves the non-coercive intervention of the mediators(s), called third party. Olaoba (1999) argued that mediation was an art adopted by the market leaders to intervene in a conflicting situation and environment to bring about a friendly disposition and restoration of order to both parties to the conflict and the market at large at the end of the intervention. Indeed, it was part of the social and cultural responsibility of the market officials and even unofficial elders in the market to intervene in any kind of conflict in the market.

Theoretical Framework

This study uses the Dispute Management Theory as its framework of analysis.

Dispute Management Theory

Dispute management theory is a framework that focuses on resolving disputes or conflicts between individuals, groups, organizations, or nations. It emphasizes the importance of addressing conflicts constructively and collaboratively, rather than through violence or aggression (Verdhan, 2021). Dispute management theory stands on several key principles, including collaboration which emphasizes the willingness and importance of working together between parties in conflict; communication which emphasizes the need for clear, respectful, and open communication between parties in conflict; mediation which involves a neutral third party who helps facilitate communication and negotiation between parties in conflict; empathy where parties must try to understand each other's perspectives and feelings to find a mutually acceptable solution; and win-win solutions which emphasizes that both parties should benefit from the resolution of the conflict, rather than one party winning at the expense of the other (Soliku, and Schraml, 2018).

Some several scholars and practitioners have contributed to the development of dispute management theory. Some of the most prominent proponents of this approach include William Ury (1953 -), Roger D. Fisher (1922 – 2012), and John Burton (1915 – 2010). These scholars and practitioners, among others, have contributed to the development of dispute management theory and its application in a variety of settings.

While dispute management theory has gained widespread recognition and acceptance in many fields, there are also some criticisms and challenges associated with this approach. One criticism of dispute management theory is that it doesn't always take into account power imbalances between parties in conflict. In situations where one party has significantly more power than the other, collaborative solutions may not be possible or may result in an unequal outcome (Wong, Wei, Wang, and Tjosvold, 2017).

The overall, while dispute management theory has many strengths, it also has its limitations and challenges associated with its application in certain contexts.

Data Analysis and Results

SECTION A: Biodata / Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Table 1: Classification of Respondents based on gender.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	556	59.02%
Female	386	40.98%
Total	942	100%

Source: Field Study, 2023

From the above table, it is evident that 556 respondents, representing 59.02% are male while 386 respondents, representing 40.98% are female. Accordingly, it can be seen that there were more male participants in the study than females.

Table 2: Classification of Respondents based on Senatorial District

Senatorial District	Frequency	Percentage
Kwara Central *Ipata and Mandate markets in Ilorin East and West LGAs*	**403**	**42.78%**
Kwara South *Owode and Kara Ajase markets in Offa and Irepodun LGAs*	**316**	**33.55%**
Kwara North *Gbugbu International and Kaima markets in Edu and Kaima LGAs*	**223**	**23.67%**
Total	**942**	**100%**

Source: Field Study, 2023

Table 2 above shows that there were more respondents from Kwara Central Senatorial District of Kwara state, with 403 respondents, representing 42.78%, than either of the other two Senatorial Districts. While 316 respondents, representing 33.55% were from Kwara South Senatorial District, 223 respondents, representing 23.67% were from Kwara North Senatorial District.

SECTION B: Answering Research Objectives and Questions

Table 3: Examine the causes of trade disputes among commodity market traders in Kwara State.

Causes of trade disputes among commodity market traders	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Pricing disagreements	600(63.7)	283(30.04)	23(2.44)	36(3.82)
Product quality issues	588(62.4)	309(32.8)	17(1.8)	28(3.0)
Dispute over space allocation	424(45.01)	320(34)	119(12.63)	79(8.36)
Inter-traders' conflicts	437(46.34)	397(42.16)	69(7.32)	39(4.18)
Lack of proper communication	515(54.7)	351(37.28)	53(5.58)	23(2.44)

Source: Field Study, 2023

The table above shows that the major and common causes of trade disputes among commodity market traders in Kwara State, Nigeria are disagreements in pricing, quality of products for sale, allocation of resources among traders, Inter-traders' conflicts, lack of proper communication, among others as the majority of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed to those items. However, more respondents disagreed (12.63%) and strongly disagreed (8.36%) on resource allocation as a major cause of trade disputes among commodity market traders in Kwara State.

Table 4: Identify the conflict management mechanisms involved in dispute resolution among commodity market traders in Kwara State

The conflict management mechanisms involved in dispute resolution	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Mediation by a neutral third party	505(53.61)	353(37.47)	47(5)	37(3.92)
Arbitration by a panel of members or external experts	617(65.5)	279(29.6)	29(3.1)	17(1.8)
Informal discussions between the parties involved	597(63.41)	299(31.71)	26(2.79)	20(2.09)
Litigation in court	76(8.07)	59(6.26)	318(33.75)	489(51.92)
Informal mechanisms for resolving disputes among traders	647(68.64)	246(26.13)	36(3.83)	13(1.4)

Source: Field Study, 2023

From the above table, it can be seen that the Commodity Market Associations in Kwara State have some conflict management mechanisms or methods such as mediation, arbitration, informal discussions, and even litigation. While market traders in Kwara State generally prefer informal mechanisms for resolving disputes among themselves with strongly agreed (68.64%) and agreed (26.13%), they are cautious of litigation as a conflict resolution mechanism as shown in the data above as disagreed (33.75%) and strongly disagreed (51.92%).

Table 5: Examine the effectiveness of the mechanisms for managing disputes among commodity market traders in Kwara State

mechanisms for managing disputes among commodity market traders	**Strongly Agree** (%)	**Agree** (%)	**Disagree** (%)	**Strongly Disagree** (%)
Effective in preventing conflicts from escalating	671(71.23)	233(24.73)	11(1.17)	27(2.87)
Effective in resolving disputes among members	563(59.76)	339(35.9)	19(2.01)	22(2.33)
Effective in restoring broken relations among members	542(57.53)	371(39.4)	12(1.27)	17(1.8)
Effective in restoring peaceful co-existence among traders	463(49.15)	403(42.78)	42(4.45)	34(3.6)
Very fair and impartial	591(62.73)	321(34.1)	21(2.22)	09(0.95)

Source: Field Study, 2023

Table 5 above, reveals the satisfactory effectiveness of the mechanisms for managing disputes among commodity market traders in Kwara State. Respondents strongly agreed (71.23%) and agreed (24.73%) that these mechanisms are effective in preventing conflicts from escalating, while (59.76%) strongly agreed and (35.9%) agreed that those mechanisms are effective in resolving disputes among commodity market traders in Kwara State. Furthermore, (57.53%) strongly agreed and (39.4%) agreed to the efficacy of the conflict management mechanisms in restoring broken relations among members, while (49.15%) strongly agreed and (42.78%) agreed to the usefulness of conflict management strategies in place in restoring peaceful co-existence among traders. Overall, the majority of the respondents considered those

mechanisms as favourably fair and impartial, with (62.73%) strongly agreed to (34.1%) agreeing to manage disputes among commodity market traders in Kwara State.

Conclusion

It concluded that various conflict management mechanisms employed in dispute resolution among commodity market traders in Kwara State have played a pivotal role in shaping the stability and prosperity of these vital economic hubs. Commodity Market Associations in Kwara State are making use of some conflict management mechanisms or methods such as mediation, arbitration, informal discussions, and even litigation. CMAs' conflict management mechanism is effective for managing disputes among commodity market traders in Kwara State. The effectiveness of these mechanisms is essential not only for the traders themselves but also for the broader community and the regional economy. By providing avenues for the peaceful resolution of disputes, these mechanisms contribute to the preservation of trust and cooperation among traders, as well as peaceful co-existence within the communities where trading activities are located.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this paper, and considering the unique context of Kwara State and its commodity market dynamics, it is recommended that:

i. More efforts should be concentrated on conducting awareness programmes and training sessions for Commodity Market Associations (CMAs) members to educate them about dispute management strategies and the attending benefits.
ii. Promotion of mediation and dialogue becomes essential. In other words, it is crucial to encourage the use of mediation as a primary dispute resolution method within commodity market associations and other market users, establish a mediation committee or team within each association and commodity market that comprises respected members who can mediate disputes impartially.
iii. A system for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of dispute management strategies within commodity market associations should be established. This will help

them to continuously gather feedback from members to identify areas for improvement and refine the processes accordingly.

iv. Commodity Market Associations (CMAs) members should ensure that they operate within the legal framework set by relevant government authorities and thereby collaborate with regulatory bodies to strengthen enforcement mechanisms and support dispute resolution efforts.

v. Kwara State Government should promote the use of alternative dispute resolution methods like arbitration for more complex disputes that cannot be resolved through mediation and establish clear guidelines for when and how arbitration should be employed.

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