



The Influence of Effective Communication on Conflict Resolution in an Ecocycle Society

Edward Owusu¹ & Levina Nyameye Abunya² & Vera Gyamera³ & Evelyn Adomah
Benneh⁴ & Ama Foriwaa Appiah⁵

¹ Department of Communication Studies, Sunyani Technical University, Sunyani, Ghana

² Department of Language and Communication Sciences, Kwame Nkrumah University of
Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana

³ Department of English, Institute of Languages, University of Media, Arts, and Communication,
Accra, Ghana

⁴ University Library, Sunyani Technical University, Sunyani, Ghana

⁵ Directorate of Academic Affairs, Akenten Appiah-Menka University of Skills Training and
Entrepreneurial Development, Kumasi, Ghana

Correspondence: Edward Owusu (PhD), Associate Professor, Sunyani Technical University, Ghana
Email: edwardowusu@minister.com

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Abstract

Conflict is inevitable in every ecocycle society, where humans are assigned different roles. It is a known fact that numerous conflict resolution mechanisms exist. However, this paper examines the influence of effective communication on conflict resolution in an ecocycle society in Kumasi, Ghana. Thus, it assesses effective communication and its impact on conflict, conflict resolution strategies, and conflict management techniques within an ecocycle society in Kumasi, Ghana. The literature review centred on ecocycle societies, communication, conflict, and conflict resolution mechanisms. A mixed-methods data collection process was employed to gather information from employees of the case study organisation. Participants included all 50 employees (i.e., management, middle-level managers, supervisors, and lower-level employees). The data collected were edited, coded, and analyzed using frequency tables and graphs. The study's results indicate that conflict ensues in the organisation, and interpersonal conflict is the kind that usually occurs. Again, the results showed that management of the organisation usually uses a collaborative (problem-solving) technique as a conflict resolution mechanism. The study recommended that the organisation's management should periodically organise training programmes or seminars on interpersonal skills and team development.

Keywords: Communication, Ecocycle Societies, Conflict, Conflict Resolution, Interpersonal Communication, Library

Introduction

Communication is 'the art and process of generating and sharing ideas.' Effective communication depends on the richness of those ideas (McPheat, 2010, p.10). According to Owusu (2017, p. 4), the ideas in McPheat's (2010) definition are contentious, as we have intrapersonal communication. So, if one produces an idea and does not share it, can't it be termed communication? The questions or issues of what will constitute the richness of ideas, and who would determine the richness of those ideas, would be problematic since we have individual differences (Owusu, 2017, p. 4). Again, the word richness in this context is subjective. Therefore, Schermerhorn (2004, p. 216) defines communication as the interpersonal process of sending and receiving symbols with messages attached to them. The weakness of Schermerhorn's (2004) definition is its inability to include intrapersonal, mass, group, and mediated (electronic) communication in the concepts, since communication in modern terms has several dimensions. In the first place, the 'inner conversation' (McClave, 2008, p. 3) or 'self-talk' (Wood, 1997, p. 22) occurs inside a person. This may include, but is not limited to, dreams, thoughts, idea formation, dilemmas, soliloquy, and brainstorming (Owusu, 2017, p. 4). Again, mass communication is the process of creating, transmitting, and receiving a message by a large audience through a medium, such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television, or the Internet (Bittner, 1992, p. 12). According to Lasswell (1948), communication includes a model that advocates comprehension by answering five basic questions: 'Who' (the communicator), 'What' (the message), 'in which channel' (the medium), 'to whom' (the audience), and 'with what effect' (the outcome)" (Lasswell, 1948, p. 37). Thus, communication refers to all human activities that combine verbal and nonverbal communication (Novak, 2019). Effective communication implies that the message sent through the appropriate channels is understood, and the desired effect is achieved. Of course, feedback would play a major role in this. For communication to be effective, the sender has to select a suitable medium or channel for the transmission process. Thus, effective communication involves not only conveying information but also considering the emotional and social aspects of the interaction (Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey, 1988).

For a business to achieve success, effective business communication should take place. Owusu (2017, p. 7) defines business communication as an organisational system for distributing the vision, mission, core values, goals, objectives, and goods/services to internal and external stakeholders of the organisation. This kind of system is essential for ensuring that the overall aim of the organisation is achieved. However, sometimes, conflict rears its ugly head. A conflict-free company has never existed and never will exist. Antagonisms, tensions, aggressions, stereotypes, negative attitudes, and frustrations will always be an integral aspect of any organisation where human assets are the key employees. Conflict is an inseparable part of people's lives. There is a variety of views about conflict.

Some people view conflict as a negative situation that must be avoided at any cost. Others have an opinion that conflict is a phenomenon that necessitates management. From this point of view, a conflict is seen as an opportunity for personal growth, and most individuals try to use it to their advantage. In organisations, potential conflict could emerge in practically every manager's decision. According to Fleetwood (2017), conflict is a natural part of organisational life that can be a catalyst for growth, change, and innovation. Coping efficiently and effectively with potential conflicts is one of the most important aspects of the manager's position. Since conflict is seemingly unavoidable, managers must be able to recognize the sources of conflict, view its constructive as well as destructive potential, learn how to manage conflict, and implement conflict resolution techniques in a practical way (Fleetwood, 2017). Since ecocycle societies depend on the peaceful coexistence of humans and the environment (Capra, 1996), effective communication is vital for conflict resolution in any of these societies (Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey, 1988). However, conflicts often arise due to competing interests and values (Deutsch, 1973). Such conflicts in an environment like a library can affect all stakeholders who patronise their services for various reasons. Therefore, the study's objective was to assess the influence of effective communication on conflict resolution at a public library in Kumasi, Ghana. The specific ones are to:

- i. identify the types of conflicts that occur in the selected ecocycle society,
- ii. examine the communication strategies for handling conflicts, and
- iii. propose strategies for improving communication in resolving conflicts.

Literature Review

Ecocycle Societies

According to Capra (1996), an ecocycle society is a community, or even a system, that espouses a complete approach to managing resources, waste, and the environment, to minimize waste and pollution and promote sustainability. Usually, such a community recognises the interconnectedness of human and natural systems and seeks to promote a more sustainable and regenerative relationship between them (Suzuki, 2009). Thus, an ecocycle society is a system premeditated to mimic the natural cycles of ecosystems, where materials are repetitively cycled back into the system, minimizing waste and pollution (McDonough and Braungart, 2002). Consequently, an ecocycle society accepts a circular economy method, where funds and other resources are used efficiently, so that waste is minimized, and materials are continually cycled back into the system (Korhonen et al., 2018). In such societies, effective written and oral communication skills ensure all stakeholders are aware of decisions made by the organisation's executives (Owusu, 2017)

Before 2020, most countries worldwide had set up several ecocycle societies. Several examples exist: Malmö, Sweden, set enterprising sustainability goals, including

becoming carbon neutral by 2020. In their case, various initiatives such as green roofs and solar panels, to promote eco-friendly practices, have been implemented (City of Malmö, 2020). Another notable society is Curitiba, Brazil, which is known for its ground-breaking urban planning and waste management, which has been recognized as a prototype for sustainable development (Rabinovitch, 1992). Vancouver, Canada, has also set go-getting sustainability goals, including becoming 100% renewable by 2050; so, they have executed numerous initiatives to lessen waste and encourage eco-friendly practices (City of Vancouver, 2020). Copenhagen, Denmark, on its part, proposes to be carbon neutral by 2025 and has applied several initiatives, such as bike-friendly infrastructure and green roofs, to promote sustainability (City of Copenhagen, 2020). Also, we have the Eco-Village Network, a global network of communities working towards sustainable development, promoting eco-friendly practices, and reducing waste (Eco-Village Network, 2020).

However, the library is one set-up or society that is less perceived as an ecocycle. Several people assume that because it is a place for research and academic work, it is not considered an ecocycle society. But it is. This is the justification: Libraries can function as community hubs, which endorse social cohesion and environmental awareness, and also provide access to information and resources on sustainable living, environmental conservation, and social justice (Audunson, 2005; Kranich, 2001). Some of them can provide access to digital resources and tools, which can facilitate digital awareness and inclusion, and reduce the environmental impact of physical materials (Jaeger et al., 2012). For example, resources like e-books, audiobooks, and other digital materials can reduce the dependency on physical copies of material (Larson, 2013). As a place of research and academic work, the library can practice sustainable management policies such as energy-efficient lighting, recycling programs, and green roofs (Antonelli, 2008), and also advocate sustainable transportation options, such as bike-sharing programmes or electric vehicle charging stations (Lankenau, 2014). It is, therefore, obvious that libraries play a crucial function in facilitating sustainability, social justice, and environmental awareness, which undoubtedly makes them an essential part of an ecocycle society; hence our decision to sample a public library in Kumasi, Ghana, for this current study.

Effective Communication

According to Lasswell (1948, p. 37), effective communication is "who says what to whom with what effect". This definition emphasizes the importance of considering the sender, message, audience, and outcome in the communication process. Moreover, effective communication is the process of sending and receiving messages in a way that achieves understanding, builds relationships, and accomplishes goals (Beebe and Masterson, 2012, p. 6). This definition stresses the essence of comprehension in building relationships to achieve organisational goals. Thus, effective communication is the sharing

of information between two or more entities, which leads to the desired outcome. The information shared is conveyed and received efficiently without the intended meaning being distorted or changed. It includes skills like non-verbal communication, attentive listening, the ability to understand and control one's own emotions, and managing stress. These skills need to be developed and improved upon in every organisation.

The Purpose of Effective Communication

In the broadest sense, the purpose of effective communication in an organisation is to effect change to influence action toward the welfare of the organisation. Business, for example, requires information about prices, competition, and government activities. This knowledge is the basis for decisions affecting product lines, production ratios, quality, marketing strategy, the mix of productive factors, and internal information flow. The immediate digestion of information and action in response to it, however, becomes extremely difficult in a large enterprise where several thousand or more people are involved (Fleetwood, 2017).

Therefore, effective communication is essential for the internal functioning of an organisation because it integrates managerial functions such as planning, organizing, staffing, leading, and controlling. Specifically, communication is needed for several purposes, among which (according to Olayinka and Aminu, 2006; Owusu, 2017; Owusu et al., 2023) are:

- i. to develop plans for the attainment of organizational goals
- ii. to establish and disseminate the goals of an organization
- iii. to organize human and other resources most effectively and efficiently.
- iv. to select, develop, and appraise members of the organisation
- v. to lead, direct, motivate, and create a climate in which people can contribute.
- vi. educate the receiver and most importantly
- vii. to resolve conflict

Thus, effective communication is a two-way process in which everyone is both an originator and a receiver of communication. Information flows vertically along the chain of command and crosswise. Crosswise communication, as used here, involves the horizontal flow of information among persons on the same or similar organisational levels, without superior-subordinate relationships (Kohn, 2011).

Conflict and Conflict Resolution

Conflict is inevitable in all business organisations (Bolman and Deal, 2013). This shows that it is a vital tool in management, firmly rooted, primarily, in business, sociology, and psychology, but not communication or education. It is complicated to define

conflict as it is difficult to come to a consensus concerning the definition of this term (Borisoff and Victor, 2008).

Generally, modern sociologists have perceived conflict as both endemic and mundane and thus regarded it as normal, leading to the disappearance of distinctive conflict sociology in recent years (Crouch, 2001).

Conflict can be looked at from different perspectives. For example, interpersonal conflict is the perceived divergence of interests, values, or goals between individuals or groups, leading to tensions, disagreements, or clashes (Brehm et al., 2005). According to Hocker and Wilmot (2017), interpersonal conflict is the most frequent and disruptive type of conflict in organisations. Intrapersonal conflict, on the other hand, refers to the psychological discomfort or tension that occurs when an individual experiences conflicting values, goals, or motivations within themselves (Janis and Mann, 1977). While intragroup conflict refers to the "disagreements or differences in opinions, values, or goals that occur among members within a group" (Jehn and Mannix, 2001), intergroup conflict refers to the "conflict that arises between two or more groups, resulting from perceived differences in goals, values, or interests" (Brewer and Gaertner, 2001). Intergroup conflict could be substantive, emotional, or cultural conflict. The other two prominent conflicts at the company level are organisational and role conflicts. Organisational conflict is a process that begins when an individual or group perceives differences in interests, values, or goals with another individual or group, and attempts to resist or overcome the perceived differences (Thomas, 1992). Role conflict refers to the experience of conflicting expectations, demands, or pressures associated with different social roles, such as work and family roles (Kahn et al., 1964). In every organisation, managers need to take steps to resolve conflicts that fall within their capacity. Conflict resolution is the process of resolving disputes or disagreements through diplomacy, negotiation, mediation, or other forms of alternative dispute resolution (Moore, 2014). Thus, it is managing and resolving disagreements or disputes within an organisation, to find a mutually acceptable solution that maintains or improves relationships and promotes organizational effectiveness (De Dreu and Gelfand, 2008). Whether functional (constructive) or dysfunctional (destructive), the conflicts that happen at the workplace are either resolved or managed. Whatever the case may be, these processes must be executed effectively. Effective conflict resolution refers to "resolving conflicts in a way that satisfies all parties, addresses the underlying issues, and improves relationships" (Folger et al., 2013). Effective conflict management, on the other hand, is the process of "identifying, analyzing, and resolving conflicts in a way that minimizes negative outcomes and maximizes positive outcomes, while also promoting learning, growth, and improved relationships" (De Dreu and Gelfand, 2008). Conflict management is used especially when managers accept the belief that, at the workplace, conflict is an inevitable human activity.

Communication Strategies for Handling Conflict

Effective conflict resolution is critical for sustaining a positive work environment, promoting employee satisfaction, and enhancing organisational performance (Brewer, 1999). Several such strategies exist. However, the review in this sub-section explores five of those strategies: withdrawing (avoiding), smoothing (obliging), forcing (dominating), compromising (bargaining), and collaboration (problem-solving).

Avoiding Conflict Resolution Style

This style is also known as the withdrawing style. Usually in this style, insistence is low. Individuals who are averse to fear, confusion, and disturbances deploy the avoiding style to evade or retreat from conflict situations (Thomas, 1992). When this style of conflict management is used, everyone loses. Thus, this strategy is often used when the conflict is perceived as insignificant or when the individual lacks the skills or confidence to address the conflict (Rahim, 2002). The biggest disadvantage is that the issue is never directly addressed or resolved. This style is appropriate to use in a no-chance-of-winning situation or when disruption would be very costly (Victor, 2012). Sometimes, avoiding conflicts can lead to unresolved issues, increased stress, resentment, and decreased employee satisfaction (Brewer, 1999; De Dreu et al., 2000). However, some researchers argue that avoiding conflicts can be an effective strategy in certain situations, such as when the conflict is trivial or when there is a significant power imbalance (Kuhn and Poole, 2000).

Accommodating Conflict Resolution Style or Obliging

Accommodating, smoothing, or obliging is another conflict resolution strategy that involves prioritising relationships over personal interests since it has a high degree of cooperativeness (Thomas, 1992; Victor, 2012). A manager using this style tries to get his/her goals, objectives, and desired outcomes to allow partners to achieve their goals and outcomes. This strategy is often used when maintaining a positive relationship is crucial, such as in customer service or team-based projects (Rahim, 2002; Daly, 2002). Because it encourages cooperation, obliging can be a useful conflict-handling strategy if it is possible to get something in return from the other party, thereby strengthening the future negotiating position of individuals (Victor, 2012). Its disadvantage is that smoothing can lead to unresolved conflicts, decreased employee satisfaction, and increased stress (Brewer, 1999; Rahim, 2002).

Competing Conflict Resolution Style or Forcing Style

This style, also known as the “*win-lose*” approach, can be determined as a conflict management approach with high assertiveness and low cooperativeness. Here, a person seeks to reach his/her preferred outcomes at the expense of a partner (Victor, 2012). This compelling or dominating style uses power or authority to impose one’s will on others (Thomas, 1992). This strategy is often used when quick action is necessary (for example, during emergencies) or when there is a substantial power disparity (Rahim, 2002). Again, it is fully deployed when an unpopular solution must be applied and a deadline is approaching (Victor, 2012). Though its strength is speed, this style is inappropriate in an open and participative climate, since it creates offenses in one of the parties that didn’t win anything (Victor, 2012). Thus, forcing can lead to decreased employee satisfaction, increased resistance, and damaged relationships (Brewer, 1999; De Dreu et al., 2000). However, some researchers argue that forcing conflicts can be an effective strategy in certain situations, such as when a quick decision is necessary or when there is a significant power imbalance (Kuhn and Poole, 2000).

Compromising Conflict Resolution Style

This style can be determined as a “*give-and-take*” approach with reasonable levels of both assertiveness and cooperativeness (Victor, 2012). Thus, it can be identified as bargaining or trading, and it’s applied when the goals and the power of both sides are of equal importance, and when it is necessary to find a temporary, timely solution (Victor, 2012). According to Thomas (1992), it is a strategy that involves finding a mutually acceptable solution (Thomas, 1992). So, it is often used when both parties have equal power and are willing to negotiate (Rahim, 2002). Compromising can lead to increased employee satisfaction, improved relationships, and enhanced collaboration (Brewer, 1999; Pruitt and Carnevale, 1993). However, some researchers argue that compromising conflicts can lead to suboptimal solutions and decreased employee satisfaction (Rahim, 2002).

Collaborating Conflict Resolution Style

This style, also known as the problem-solving method, is a strategy that involves working together to find a mutually beneficial solution (Thomas, 1992). Since both sides creatively work together to achieve the goals and desired outcomes, benefitting all involved parties, this style is characterized by high levels of assertiveness and cooperativeness, and it is often described as the “*win-win*” scenario (Victor, 2012). When both parties are committed to finding a long-term solution, this strategy is used (Rahim, 2002). Collaboration can lead to increased employee satisfaction, improved relationships, and

enhanced organizational performance (Brewer, 1999; Tjosvold and Sun, 2000). However, some researchers argue that collaborative conflict resolution can be time-consuming and require significant resources (Daly, 2002). Again, it can be difficult to implement this style as the process of collaborating mandates sincere effort by all parties, and it may take a lot of time to reach a consensus (Victor, 2012).

Methods

This section covers information on research design, population, sample and sampling technique, data collection instrument, and data analysis technique used. The design of the paper was a mixed-methods one. Because of this, a mixed-mode data collection process (of closed-ended questionnaires and interviews) was used for this paper.

This study adopted a single case study, and the targeted ecocycle society of interest was the employees of a public library in Kumasi, Ghana. Since the total population of the case study organisation at the time (June 2023) of collecting data was about 50 employees, all of them were sampled for the study. They ranged from top management to middle-level managers, supervisors, and lower-level employees. The information about the employees was sourced from the human resources department. The data collected from the respondents were edited, coded, and analyzed. After the editing, the next stage we executed was the tabulation. Here, the main information we solicited was classified and tabulated. For this process, we summarized the quantitative data into statistical tables. After the tables were drawn, the data were then analyzed using frequency tables and graphs in the data analysis.

Ethical consideration plays a major role in research studies, especially where human subjects are used in a study. In this current study, some ethical considerations were made. To begin with, we concealed the name of the organisation from which the participants were drawn. We also informed the participants about the purpose of the study. Thus, we sought their consent before we collected data from them. We maintained confidentiality by ensuring that the names and departments of the participants were not mentioned. Since no participant was coerced into the research, we gave them the right to withdraw from the study at any stage they wished.

Results and Discussions

The Type of Conflict That Occurs in the Selected Ecocycle Society



Figure 1: How often conflicts occur in the workplace among employees
Source: Field Work (2023)

To establish the frequency of conflicts in the study area, we asked the question: *How often do conflicts occur at the workplace among employees?* In answering this question, 37 (i.e. the majority) of the respondents, representing 74%, selected *very often*. While 8 of them (representing 16%), ticked *sometimes*, five (5) of them, who were in the minority (representing 10%), chose *never*. This situation corroborates Bolman and Deal's (2013) assertion that conflict is an inevitable concept in every organisation. This is an indication that, like every organisation, conflict exists at the selected study area. Again, we asked the respondents about the kind of conflicts that they usually have. Table 1 depicts their responses:

Table 1: What kind of conflict do you normally experience?

		Response	
		Frequency	Percentage
What kind of conflict do you have?	Interpersonal conflict (personal dislikes or personality differences)	21	42
	Intra-group conflict (more than one person within a group)	9	17
	Intergroup conflict (different groups, teams, and departments)	15	30
	Inter-organizational conflict (between organizations)	5	11
	Total	50	100

Source: Field Survey (2023)

From Table 1, it is obvious that when respondents were asked about the kind of conflicts that existed at the workplace, 21 of them, representing 42%, indicated they usually have interpersonal conflicts. Fifteen (15) of them, representing 30%, opted for intergroup conflicts. While 9 of them (17%) said intragroup conflicts, the remaining 5 (11%) selected inter-organisational conflicts. This suggests that personal dislikes or personality differences (i.e., interpersonal conflicts) are the major conflict areas in the study organisation. This confirms Hocker and Wilmot's (2017) research that interpersonal conflict is the most recurrent and disruptive type of conflict in organisations.

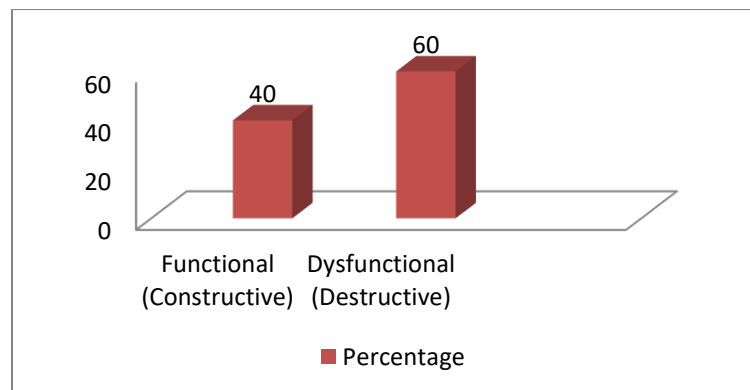


Figure 2: Constructive or destructive conflict

Source: Field survey (2023)

In Figure 2, thirty (30) respondents, representing 60%, indicated that the kind of conflict at their workplace is destructive or dysfunctional. However, the other 20 respondents, representing 40%, said they would rather perceive constructive or functional conflict in the workplace. This result suggests that attention should be paid to destructive conflicts at the workplace since they have the propensity to destroy relationships.

Communication Strategies for Handling Conflicts

The next objective of the study was to examine the communication strategies for handling conflicts in the organisation. Respondents were, therefore, asked to respond to a series of questions related to the communication strategies to handle crises at the organisation. Their responses are presented as follows:

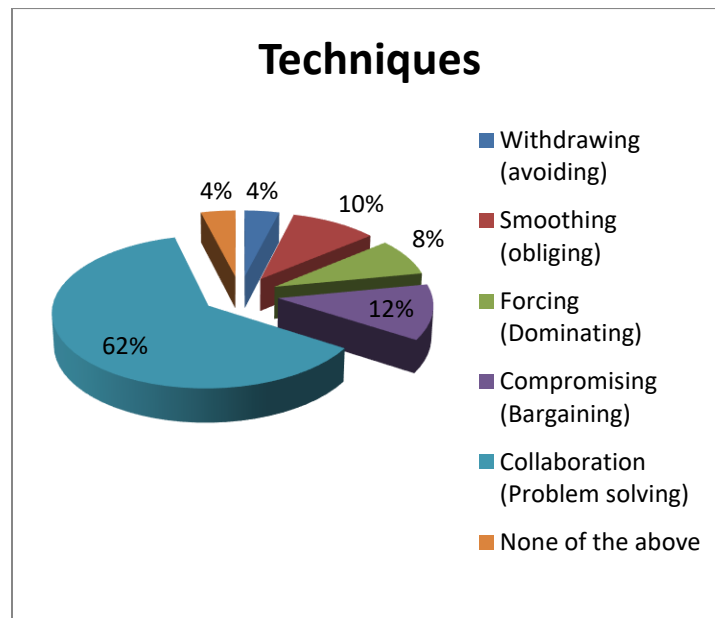


Figure 3: Techniques used to settle conflicts at the workplace
Field survey (2023)

When respondents were asked to state the technique used to resolve conflicts at the workplace, the majority (i.e., 31), representing 62%, said the organisation uses the collaboration method (Problem-solving). Six (6) of them, representing 12%, said they resort to the compromising (bargaining) method. While 10% (5) of the respondents said they normally use smoothing (obliging), four (4), representing 8%, said the organisation uses the forcing (dominating) method. Lastly, 2 of them (4%) said the organisation uses

withdrawing (avoiding), and the remaining 2 (4%) selected *none of the above* option. According to the results, the most popular strategy or technique is collaborative problem-solving (62%), and the most unpopular is withdrawing (avoidance) (4%). Although almost all the managers know these conflict-management styles, 4% do not use these strategies or techniques. This confirms the literature that the compromising method can lead to improved employee fulfilment, enhanced relationships, and greater collaboration (Brewer, 1999; Pruitt and Carnevale, 1993).

Table 2: The Use of Third-Party Intervention

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Yes, we make use of it	35	70
	No, we don't make use of it	10	20
	Have no idea of the technique	2	4
	No answer	3	6
	Total	50	100

Source: Field survey (2023)

Some conflicts that occur in ecocycle societies require the use of a third party. Table 2 shows that 35 of the respondents (representing 70%) answered in the affirmative when asked if they used third-party intervention at the workplace, while 10 (representing 20%) gave a 'no' response. Two of them (representing 4%) said they had no idea, and three (representing 6%) failed to respond.

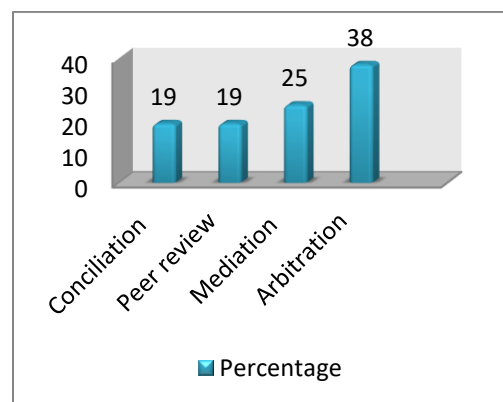


Figure 4: The kind of third-party intervention used
Source: Field survey (2023)

The variables in Figure 4 were analyzed with 70% of the 50 respondents (i.e., 35) who use third-party intervention [see Table 2]. From Figure 4, when respondents were asked to select the third-party intervention used in the organisation for resolving conflict, 38% (i.e., 13 out of the 35 respondents) said they use arbitration. While 8 respondents (i.e., 25%) selected mediation, 7 of them (i.e., 19%) each selected the use of conciliation and peer review. From the results, it is obvious that anytime a third-party intervention is sought in the organisation, arbitration is the most sought-after intervention for resolving conflicts. This aligns with interventions such as avoiding, obliging, dominating, bargaining, and collaboration as suggested in Thomas (1992).

Proposed Strategies for Improving Communication in Resolving Conflicts

The third and final objective of the study was to suggest ways of improving communication in resolving conflicts at the selected public library. The respondents were asked various questions on communicative ways of resolving conflicts at the workplace. Their responses are recorded in Tables 3 and 4, and Figure 5:

Table 3: How would you rate your problem-solving skills?

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Very Good	5	10
Good	34	68
Average	10	20
Bad	1	2
Very bad	0	0
Total	50	100

Source: Field survey (2023)

From Table 3, the respondents were asked to rate their problem-solving skills; 34 of them (representing 68%) responded that their level of problem-solving skill was good. While 10 of them (i.e., 20%) rated their problem-solving skill as average, 5 respondents (i.e., 10%) said it was 'very good'. However, 1 person (i.e., 2%) selected option 'bad', and no one selected option 'very bad'. The results suggest that from the perspectives of the respondents, the managers can handle conflict in a better way in the organisation.

Table 4: Skills managers should possess to solve conflict in the workplace

Rank	Statements	Number of Times Ranked	Most Important statement
1	Paying much attention to the feelings expressed	20	40%
2	Being able to control emotions and behavior	15	29%
3	Being aware and respecting differences	8	17%
4	Managing stress quickly while remaining alert and calm	7	14%

Source: Field survey (2023)

For this category, the respondents were asked to rank the conflict resolution skills of their managers at the workplace. The most important statement was to be ranked 4, and the least important was to be ranked 1. All statements were to be ranked, and no rank could be used more than once. The results are illustrated in Table 4. From the results, it is obvious that 20 respondents (i.e., 40%) of the staff ranked '*paying much attention to the feelings expressed*' as the most important skill (number 1). This is followed by the views of 15 respondents (i.e., 29%) who ranked '*being able to control emotions and behavior*' as number 2. Again, 8 respondents (i.e., 17%) ranked the statement, '*being aware and respecting differences*' as number 3. Lastly, 7 respondents (14%) ranked the statement, '*managing stress quickly while remaining alert and calm*' as the 4th variable. This suggests that most staff in this ecocycle society expect managers to pay much attention to the feelings expressed when there is conflict.

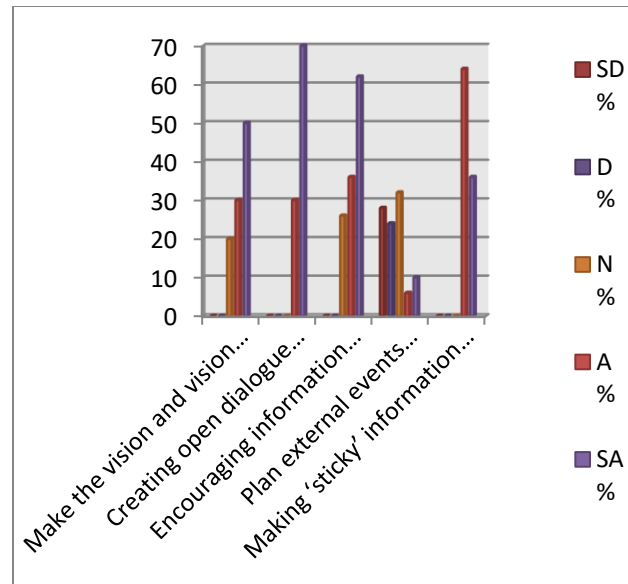


Figure 5: Means of improving conflict resolution at the workplace

Source: Field survey (2023)

As a means of improving communication for solving conflicts at the workplace, respondents were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement on a scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree. From Figure 5, it is clear that 25 respondents (i.e., 50%) agreed that making the vision and mission clearer will go a long way to help resolve conflicts at the workplace. Also, 15 respondents (i.e., 30%) agreed that when the vision and mission are clearer, they would help in resolving conflicts, but 10 respondents (i.e., 20%) selected the neutral statement. Regarding creating open dialogue between conflicting parties as a means of resolving conflict, 35 respondents (i.e., 70%) strongly agreed with the statement, while 15 of them (i.e., 30%) agreed with the statement.

On information sharing, 31 respondents (i.e., 62%) selected 'strongly agreed' to the statement '*encouraging information sharing among employees helps in resolving conflicts*', while 18 of them (i.e., 36%) selected 'agreed'; however, 13 of them (i.e., 26%) selected 'neutral' to the statement. Concerning the next statement, '*planning external event between employees at the workplace*', 16 respondents (i.e. 32%) selected 'neutral', 14 (i.e. 28%) ticked 'strongly agreed', 12 respondents (i.e. 24%) selected 'disagreed' to the statement, and 5 of them (i.e.10%) selected 'strongly agreed' to the statement. Finally, when respondents were asked if making sticky information available to all employees would help resolve conflicts, 32 of them (i.e., 64%) selected 'agreed' to the statement, with the remaining 18 (i.e., 36%) selecting 'strongly agree' to the statement.

Findings and Discussions

The Types of Conflicts That Occur in the Selected Ecocycle Society

The study revealed that conflict occurs at the selected ecocycle society frequently. This revelation emerged when 37 respondents (i.e., 74%) selected 'very often' to the question about the conflict frequency at the workplace. This confirms the stance of Fleetwood (2017) that conflict is seemingly unavoidable, and managers must recognize the sources of conflict, view its constructive and destructive potential, learn how to manage conflict, and practically implement conflict resolution techniques. Again, the study revealed that interpersonal conflict is the conflict that occurs in the workplace the most. Thus, 21 respondents (i.e., 42%) specified that they usually have interpersonal conflicts. Also, fifteen (15) of them (i.e., 30%) opted for intergroup conflicts. As 9 of them (17%) said intragroup conflicts, 5 (11%) selected inter-organisational conflicts. This clearly shows that in this selected ecocycle society (a public library), various forms of interpersonal skirmishes are the major conflict situation that occur there. This situation justifies the assertion of Hocker and Wilmot (2017) that interpersonal conflict is the most persistent and troublesome type of conflict in every organisation. Again, the respondents were asked if the conflict that occurs at the workplace was constructive or destructive. In answering this, 30 (i.e., 60%) said the conflict situation at the workplace was destructive. Nevertheless, 20 (i.e., 40%) indicated that it was constructive.

Communication strategies for Handling Conflicts

The study showed, in general, that respondents are familiar with conflict resolution techniques. Thus, they have a good knowledge of conflict resolution styles that are used in practice. According to the respondents, the communication techniques mostly used for handling conflicts are collaborating (i.e., 62% of the respondents indicated this) and compromising (i.e., 12% said this). Only 4% of the respondents were unaware of any conflict resolution styles. In the literature, several authors (for example, Brewer, 1999; Pruitt and Carnevale, 1993) have confirmed the efficacy of the compromising method as it has the propensity of leading to better fulfilment of workers, improved relationships, and superior teamwork. When the participants were asked whether their ecocycle society uses a third-party intervention in resolving conflict, 35 of them (i.e., 70%) of the total 50 respondents answered in the affirmative. Thus, 70% of the respondents confirmed that third-party intervention is usually used in resolving conflicts at the public library. In the opinion of these respondents, arbitration stands tall when resorting to a third-party intervention becomes obligatory. Thus, 38% (i.e., 13 out of the 35 respondents of the 50 who subscribed to the use of third-party intervention) confirmed this assertion. For the remaining 15 participants, 8 of them (i.e., 25%) opined that mediation is the most used

third-party intervention at the ecocycle society (i.e., a public library). However, in the minds of 7 respondents (i.e., 19%), conciliation and peer review are the most sought-after third-party interventions for conflict resolution.

Proposed Strategies for Improving Communication in Resolving Conflicts

The study proposed some strategies for improving conflict resolution at the selected ecocycle society. From the results of the study, 25 of the respondents (i.e., 50%) opined that setting and making clear vision and mission statements will lead to most conflicts being solved. Again, 35 of the respondents (i.e., 70%) proposed the creation of open dialogue as a means of improving conflict resolution at the workplace. According to them, this situation makes it possible for entities in the organisation to voice out their sentiments. Another proposal that the respondents made was ‘encouraging information sharing among employees’ (which facilitates conflict resolution, according to 31 of the 50 respondents). Another conflict resolution proposal given by 32 of the respondents (i.e., 64%) was ‘making sticky information available to all employees.’ This, according to them, can lead to increased transparency and foster a sense of trust and transparency within the organisation. It can also lead to improved communication and enhanced collaboration since sticky information can empower employees to make better decisions. However, this has some negative effects. Providing too much sticky information can lead to information overload and misinterpretation of information (Owusu & Mahdi, 2020).

Conclusion

Over the years, most studies on ecocycles have focused on biology, waste, managing resources, environmental sustainability, greening, human well-being, health, economic, social, and cultural systems. These areas, according to the literature (for example, Arthur et al., 2024; Arthur et al., 2023; Capra, 1996; Suzuki, 2009; McDonough and Braungart, 2002; Korhonen et al., 2018), are the core issues in ecocycle research. Other ecocycle research papers are Lyulyov (2021a) (which focuses on *Labor Resources on Green Competitiveness of Enterprises*), Lyulyov (2021b) (i.e., *Human Resources Management at the Company: Gender Factor*), Lyulyov (2021c) (which is on *The Competitiveness of the Labor Potential of the Territory and its Brand*), Lyulyov (2021d), and (i.e., *Formation of the Territorial Brand Under Gender Consideration*).

However, papers on libraries and research hubs where ecocycle society research is documented are minimal. This justifies our decision to use a public library as our research's physical space or scope. Consequently, this work focused on effective communication as a tool for resolving conflict in an ecocycle society. The study revealed that effective communication (i.e., interpersonal communication and other communication modes) is

essential if the organisation is to achieve its goals and objectives effectively and efficiently. Thus, all forms of conflicts can be reduced when the management of every business entity facilitates proper communication among the organisation's internal stakeholders. Human interaction would be practically impossible without effective communication, and organisational goals may not be achieved. The essence of effective communication is the ability of the organisation to ensure that proper information reaches the right people at the right time. Because communication is essential for the internal functioning of an organisation, some recommendations were made for the study. Since the results showed that the most common sources of conflict are interpersonal and intergroup conflicts, it is recommended that training be provided for interpersonal skills and team development of entities in the organisation. Again, role-playing and sensitivity training can be used to develop interpersonal skills. Another recommendation for managers of this ecocycle society is to develop the people's emotional intelligence. It is also recommended that interventions on problem-solving skills be instituted at all levels of the organisation for people to gain proficiency in the third-party intervention technique.

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