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EFFECT OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN NIGERIAN BOTTLING COMPANY, ASEJIRE PLANT, IBADAN, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Collective bargaining is an effective machinery adopted by any organization that craves for industrial peace and harmony in resolving its conflict as dispute is part of human life. This study examines the effect of collective bargaining on conflict resolution using Nigerian Bottling Company, Asejire Plant, Ibadan as the case study. Simple random sampling technique was adopted for the study with the use of structured questionnaire to elicit information from the respondents. The descriptive statistics used comprised simple percentages, mean and ranking while inferential statistics utilized was a linear regression via Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings of the study established that collective bargaining has significant effect on industrial harmony in the Nigerian Bottling Company, $F(559.7, p < 0.05)$. The results of the study also identified outrageous population of employees ($\bar{x} = 2.31, SD = 0.91$), role of government in industrial relations ($\bar{x} = 2.19, SD = 1.00$), and inducement of labour unions' leaders by management in the organization ($\bar{x} = 2.18, SD = 0.81$) as main factors that influence collective bargaining in an attempt to resolve conflict in the Nigerian Bottling Company. The study concludes that management – employees' joint negotiation or consultation and not confrontation on matters of concern are necessities for timely and effective conflict resolution in the organization as these guarantee needed industrial peace and harmony for business success. The study therefore recommended that Management of Nigerian Bottling Company should regard collective bargaining as the appropriate apparatus for resolving industrial conflicts so as to ensure industrial harmony and enhanced employees' productivity.

Keywords: Collective bargaining, Conflict resolution, Employers' associations, Industrial harmony, Trade union.

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Introduction

Conflict is part of human life as this is inevitable in every organization with human interactions. This is bound to occur from time to time in any setting regardless of the nature – cultural, social, religious or economic organization given the dynamics of human interactions and due to the differences in interest, goal, perception, viewpoint, value, experience and desire. The Paradox of conflict is that it is both the force that can tear relationships apart and the force that binds them together, meaning that they can either be healthy (constructive) or unhealthy (destructive). This dual nature of conflict makes it an important concept to study and understand (Nkowonta, 2014).

The manner in which conflict is being handled or resolved in any organization is crucial to the peace and harmony that exist among all those who make up such organization. This particularly dictates the organization's labour – management relationship. It equally goes a long way to determine the degree of the organization's accomplishments as well as the promptness of achievement that that organization has in the long run since no establishment can be in operation without experiencing or having dispute or disagreement. Collective bargaining is one of the key pillars of industrial relations predominantly in the practice of industrial democracy and exercise of conflict resolution. This plays pivotal role in the creation and sustenance of industrial peace and harmony through timely recognition of conflict areas and taking of appropriate steps to forestall these through negotiation and consensus.

Collective bargaining is central to any industrial relations system since it is a tool through which regulated flexibility is achieved. Collective bargaining is an industrial practice made to enhance harmony by mutual settlement of trade disputes between an employer and workers or their respective unions. The term collective bargaining is applied to the arrangement under which wages and conditions of employment are settled by a bargain in form of an agreement made between employers or associations of employers and workers organizations (Ebhomam, 2015).

Collective bargaining and conflict resolution issues are most times considered to be very important due to the fact that workplaces are made up of a number of people from varying background with dissimilar interests and needs to gratify. As said by Nkowonta (2014), conflict in the workplace tends to be on the increase resulting from the unfavourable nature of the country's economy as employees are pressured to fight for upward reviewing of their earnings and as well clamor for improved wellbeing. This is with a view to cope with the inflation rate in the land. However, until solution is found or made available to this challenge, it cannot be said that attempts to ensure conflict resolution have yielded the much needed result (Nkowonta, 2014). Therefore, to ensure unanimity and alignment of diverse interests in the workplaces, particularly labour and employers' interests, collective bargaining is a necessity.

However, while some studies have been carried out on collective bargaining and conflict management or resolution in Nigeria which mostly focused on educational and public sectors with limited attempts in the country to establish the relationship between these two concepts in the manufacturing companies such as Nigerian Bottling Company. Examples of studies being carried out in the country include Ibietan (2013); Bello and Kinge (2014) whose researches centred on Nigeria's public sector and Taraba Public Service respectively. Also, Mohammed (2007); Ekwoaba, Ideh and Ojikutu (2015) researched on Nigerian Federal Universities, hence this study. Therefore, this study attempts to examine the impact of collective bargaining on conflict resolution in the Nigerian Bottling Company.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to assess the effect of collective bargaining on conflict resolution in Nigerian Bottling Company, Asejire Plant, Ibadan, Nigeria, while the specific objectives of the study are to

- i. identify determine factors affecting collective bargaining in resolving conflict in the study area.
- ii. examine the effect of collective bargaining on industrial harmony in the Nigeria Bottling Company.

Hypothesis of the Study

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of collective bargaining on industrial harmony in the Nigerian Bottling Company.

Literature Review

Conceptual Clarifications

Collective bargaining

Collective bargaining is the practice in which union and company representatives meet to negotiate a new labour contract (O'Sullivan & Sheffrin, 2003). It involves the process by which workers' unions operating in the workplace engage in negotiation, administration and interpretation of collective agreements comprising matters such as wages, hours of works, separation, work and its apportionment among the group of workers. Collective bargaining similarly includes procedural agreement and other conditions of employment, engaging in concerted economic action and dispute settlement procedures/conflict management and resolution (Uvieghara, 2001).

Consistent with Flanders (1970), collective bargaining refers a social practice that continually turns disagreements into agreements in an orderly way. In industrial relations, collective bargaining encompasses workers organizing together typically in unions with an intention of deliberating and agreeing with their employers on issues relating to their working conditions which ordinarily develop to a written contract itemizing the wages, hours and other conditions for

a specified period as jointly decided on by the involved parties. It is on similar note that (Yesufu, 1982; Ubeku, 1983; Fajana,2000; Henry, 2004; Onah, 2008) opine that collective bargaining makes settling of industrial conflicts possible by allowing decisions on earnings, working hours and conditions to be made mutually by employee and employer representatives through collective agreement.

Conflict, and Conflict Resolution

Conflict

Generally, conflict has numerous conceptions and its description depends on the author and also the context in which it is being used or addressed. Conflict has been defined by different scholars in different ways. Amaline (1998) defines industrial conflicts as disagreement between individuals or groups within the organization. Adesina (2009) views conflict as the process that results in actions such as discord, strike, mutual interference of opposing or incompatible forces. In the opinion of Anioke (2002), conflict means difference or disagreement of opinions, ideals or goals between parties, individuals or groups. Conflict is the tension that is experienced when a group of people feels that their needs or desires are likely to be denied (Bens, 1997). This signifies disagreement in which involved individuals feel that their needs, interests or concern are threatened. It occurs when a worker's industrial philosophies and methods for reaching a desired goal differ from those of the organization or a group within the organization (Fraedrick, 1994).

Conflict may possibly be inter-personal or inter-group. Also, it may perhaps take place in the workplace in a single or multi-dimensional way. This may be covert or obvious, violent or non-violent in nature in the organization. Besides, industrial conflict is capable of being disruptive; particularly when workers are unnecessarily pressured by the management in a bid to achieve the organization's predetermined objectives or set goals at all cost. Nkwonta (2014) pinpointed five categories of conflict in the organization and these include:

- i. Conflict within the individual:** Conflict within an individual happens when some of an employee's expected duties are in conflict with his other responsibilities or when the employee is believed to perform above his ability. Here, the employee is not in any way sure of what are required of him at work. Individuals are often times made to react to other types of conflicts in the workplace.
- ii. Conflict between individuals:** This type of conflict frequently results from personality differences. It occurs due to role associated pressure such as concerns superiors and their subordinates.
- iii. Conflict between individuals and groups:** This conflict type often has to do with how or the manner in which an employee handles pressures for compliance with the performance set standard that are mounted by his peers or association in which he is a member.

- iv. **Conflicts between groups in the same organization:** This conflict ensues between the dissimilar associations or work group inside the same establishment.
- v. **Conflict between organizations:** Conflict between organizations can be termed competition among rival companies. This type of conflict is needed or looked for in most places as it is capable of bringing about invention of new things or manufacturing of quality goods that can meet the need of the people prompted by judicious use of available resources and due to discovery of novel ideas.

Conflict between individuals is more suitable for this study as it is often occasioned by role related pressure such as concerns superiors and their subordinates in business organizations.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict Resolution implies a reduction, elimination or termination of conflict; it involves mediation, negotiation, bargaining and arbitration which fall into the conflict resolution category (Robbins, 1978). Conflict resolution involves efforts made to guarantee an end to the conflict or the internal apparatuses that different authorities in the organization utilized to settle dispute or discord. This method is a mixture of specific behaviours and orientations employed to tackle conflict resulting from a definite circumstance. This includes the It encompasses conflict management and control used before or during and after dispute has happened. This can in another way round be termed a plan relating to organizational obligation for treating amicably disagreement whenever it ensues as conflict subsists on every occasion that it is not possible for others to fulfill their desired actions. Conflict resolution ensues that involved parties in a conflict are made to be equally pleased with the aftermath of the resolution of the conflict.

Conflict Resolution Techniques

Conflict resolution techniques are another means of guaranteeing industrial harmony in the workplace and these do go a long way to settle dispute more rapidly than litigation.

Arbitration: This is a process where a neutral third party who has been chosen by the disputing parties listens to them and makes a decision on the conflicting matter with no room for appeal (Cahn & Abigail, 2007). Here, the arbitrator's judgment is known after he must have heard the views of all those involved in the conflict as his verdict cannot be appealed. Amongst the advantages of arbitration are that the processes of arriving at decisions are very fast when compared with court room litigations, and it is relatively cheap or when compared with court action. But a major weakness here is that the procedure is very comparable to litigation.

Negotiation: This is defined as a process whereby two or more parties decide what each will give and take in an exchange between them (Rubin & Brown, 1975). Negotiation is a give and take decision making process involving

interdependent parties with different preferences as one party usually wants to influence what the other party wants to get (Neale & Bazerman, 1992).

Mediation: Mediation refers to the voluntary informal, non-binding process undertaken by an external party that fosters the settlement of differences or demand between directly invested parties (Millier, 2003). In mediation setting, the Mediator makes it possible for the involved parties in the conflict to easily argue their cases before he makes his verdict known. Sometimes, mediation does not result in conflict resolution, but makes relationship among the parties possible. Parties during conflict resolutions are quite satisfied with mediation as they take into consideration all aspects of the conflict thereby allowing them to be in full control of the situation (Wall and Callister, 1995).

Conciliation: Conciliation is considered less formal than mediation or arbitration as it is said to give less control to the Conciliator who only provides an informal communication link between the parties thereby improving their relationship rather than settling the issues between them. However, because of its less assertive nature, it is considered less effective than mediation (Wall and Callister, 1995). The main goal is to establish direct communication and find a constructive solution to the conflict at hand.

Theoretical Review

With a view to describe the relationship existing between collective bargaining and conflict resolution, two related theories (Mary Parker Follett Conflict theory and Managerial Grid Theory theory) were assessed.

Mary Parker Follett Conflict Theory

In 1940, Follett referred compromise, integration, domination, suppression and avoidance as five approaches by which conflict could be dealt with in the organization. As stated by her, domination connotes that one of the involved parties in dispute has winning over the other during conflict while when making reference to compromise style, every party affords to part way with some of his concerns so as to give room for other party's concerns and also to have a consensus. Follett maintained that commonly, people abhor surrendering any of their concerns. In integrating style, Follett opined that parties in the conflict do prefer the way out of their conflict in such a manner that it would be advantageous to all those involved. She therefore suggested integrating style as the most preferred out of the five enumerated approaches.

Robert R. Blake and Jane Mouton's Managerial Grid Theory

Blake and Mouton (1964) introduced a two dimensional grid to categorize interpersonal conflict styles of resolving conflict which were later grouped into five: forcing, withdrawing, smoothing, compromising, and problem-solving in which manager's attitudes served as the bases for the explanation of these five methods of resolving conflicts in workplace. Consequently, the theory is premised on two dimensions which are of concerns for production and concerns for people as conflict in the organization is dependent on the wishes of an individual to have his predetermined goals

attained in resistance to keeping interpersonal relationship. However, Follett's integration aspect of the conflict theory is relevant to this study. It allows participants to negotiations or bargaining to engage in mutual give and take until a meeting of the minds results, thus producing a healthy and cooperative attitudes etc.

Empirical Review

Collective bargaining has turned out to be a main topic of discourse; however, comparatively not much attention has been paid on the effect of collective bargaining on conflict resolution in organizations that are non-governmental. Some researchers have attempted to explore this effect; however, their discussions have been restricted to some specifics.

For example, Akhaukwa, Maru and Byaruhanga (2013) researched the effect of collective bargaining process on industrial relations in public universities in Kenya. Linear regression analysis was utilized as the statistical tool. The finding of the study revealed that collective bargaining process has a significant effect on industrial relations. It was therefore recommended that parties to collective bargaining should always endeavour to reassess their strategies with a view to use these for the enhancement of their relationship.

Bello and Kinge (2014) carried out a study titled "role of collective bargaining in the management of the industrial conflicts in Taraba State Public Service between 2007 and 2011". The researchers used simple descriptive analysis and percentages for data analysis, and chi-square for testing hypothesis of their study. The results of the research showed that collective bargaining plays active role in the management of industrial conflicts of Taraba State Public Service, and that its role has brought about resolution of the 2009 and 2011 state-wide strikes. Recommendation was consequently made that the state government together with the state labour union should accept conflicts as their joint challenge and always sees collective bargaining as the most satisfactory means of resolving any of such skirmishes.

Also, in their study, Ekwoaba, Ideh, and Ojikutu (2015) examined the use of collective bargaining as an effective instrument for management of conflict in educational institutions with a focus on both Academic and Non Academic Staff Unions of University of Lagos Division. The study employed stratified random sampling method for the selection of 120 respondents, while questionnaire, interviews, and literature search were adopted for data collection. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics; frequencies and simple percentages with statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 15.0. It was established from the findings of the study that, effective collective bargaining has positive effect on productivity; there is existence of a recognized practice for conflict resolution in the universities; and that collective bargaining is a proper tool for the resolution of conflict in the universities. The paper commended that the University should employ conflict acceptance strategy and

as well emphasis on its effective resolution strategies so as to turn into benefits for the university the sign of conflict.

This study therefore fills a gap by examining the effect of collective bargaining on conflict resolution in non – governmental establishment (Nigerian Bottling Company), rather than public institutions or government ministries.

Methodology

This study used primary as it utilized a survey research. The sample size consists of 195 employees of Nigerian Bottling Company, Asejire Plant, Ibadan. Simple random sampling technique was adopted for the study with the use of structured questionnaire to elicit information from the respondents. The questionnaire consists of two sections. The section one featured variables having to do with bio-data and it was to directly gather background (personal) information about the respondents. Section two has part A and B. Part A comprises questions measuring the effect of collective bargaining on conflict resolution, while part B is made up of questions intended to ascertain the factors affecting conflict resolution in the study area. Out of the total questionnaire of 195 administered, 178 were filled and returned. In the study, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data collected. The descriptive statistics comprised simple percentages, mean and ranking while inferential statistics used was a linear regression via Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results and Discussion of Findings

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Information of the Respondents

Variable	Levels	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	102	57.3
	Female	76	42.7
	Total	178	100.0
Age in years	20-30	41	23.0
	31-40	48	27.0
	41-50	33	18.5
	51 and Above	56	31.5
	Total	178	100.0
Educational Attainment	SSCE/GCE	38	21.3
	NCE/OND	27	15.2
	HND/B.Sc.	47	26.4
	Masters	40	22.5
	Others	26	14.6
	Total	178	100.0
Years of Experience	Below 4yrs	56	31.5
	4-7yrs	36	20.2
	8-10yrs	27	15.2
	Above 10yrs	59	33.1
	Total	178	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents that participated in this study. It is shown that out of 178 (100.0%) respondents that participated in this study, 102(57.3%) were males while 76(42.7%) were females. This shows that more males than females participated in this study. Age distribution in years of the respondents shows that 41(23.0%), 48(27.0%) and 33(18.5%) were respectively within the ages of 20-30, 31-40, and 41-50 while 56 (31.5%) of the respondents were of age 51 years and above. In terms of educational attainment of the respondents, it is shown that 38 (21.3%) of the respondents had SSCE/GCE, 27(15.2%) had NCE/OND, 47(26.4%) had HND/B.Sc., 40(22.5%) had master's degree while 26(14.6%) indicated other degree not listed. It shows further that 56(31.5%) of the respondents have had working experience less than 4 years, 36(20.2%) had worked for 4 to 7 years, 27(15.2%) had between 8-10 years of experience on the job, while 59 (33.1%) had more than 10 years of working experience. Indication is shown from this distribution that most of the respondents sampled for this study have had more than 4 years working experience.

Research Question

What are the factors affecting collective bargaining in resolving conflict in the Nigeria Bottling Company?

Table 2: Factors Affecting Collective Bargaining expressed in Resolving Conflict in the Nigeria Bottling Company

Factors	Mean	SD	Rank
Recognition of union and bargain in good faith	2.03	0.90	5
Outrageous population of workers	2.31	0.91	1
Statutory role of government in industrial relations	2.19	1.00	2
Weakness on the part of management	2.14	0.86	4
Labor union are bought over by management	2.18	0.81	3
Grand Mean	10.88		
Average Grand Mean	2.17		

Source: Field survey, 2018

Table 2 shows factors affecting collective bargaining in resolving conflict as expressed by the staff of the Nigeria Bottling Company. Considering the average grand mean value of 2.17 set as cut-off point, it is shown that factors such as outrageous population of workers ($\bar{x}=2.31$, $SD=0.91$), statutory role of government in industrial relations ($\bar{x}=2.19$, $SD=1.00$), and buying of labour unions' leaders over by management ($\bar{x}=2.18$, $SD=0.81$), were the significant factors influencing the collective bargaining in resolving conflict as expressed by the staff of the Nigeria Bottling Company. These factors were respectively ranked as 1st, 2nd and 3rd. It is shown in this result that factors such as outrageous

population of workers, statutory role of government in industrial relations and labor union are bought over by management were identified as significant factors influencing the collective bargaining in resolving conflict as expressed by the staff of the Nigeria Bottling Company.

Re-Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of collective bargaining on industrial harmony in the Nigerian Bottling Company.

Table 3: Summary of Regression Analyses to determine the effect of collective bargaining on industrial harmony in the Nigerian Bottling Company (N = 178)

Variable	B	SEB	β
Constant	2.383	.472	
CB	1.241	.068	.712
R		.673	
R ²		.452	
F		559.79*	

*p < 0 .05. CB= Collective Bargaining, Dependent Variable: Conflict Resolution

Source: Authors' Computation, 2019

Table 3 shows the result of the effect of collective bargaining on industrial harmony in the Nigerian Bottling Company. It is shown that collective bargaining variable yields a coefficient of a multiple correlation square (R²) of 0.452. This value is statistically significant at 0.05 probability level. In order words, collective bargaining variable could explain for 45.2% of the observed variance in industrial harmony. This outcome therefore implies that collective bargaining had a significant effect on industrial harmony in the Nigerian Bottling Company.

Findings

The findings of this study established a significant effect of collective bargaining on industrial harmony in the Nigerian Bottling Company of Asejire Plant, Ibadan, meaning that collective bargaining is a helpful and effectual tool for industrial conflict resolution. The results from the study are in tandem with the research findings of Akhaukwa, Maru and Byaruhanga (2013) that collective bargaining process had a significant effect on industrial relations environment in Kenyan Public Universities. The findings of the study are also consistent with the findings of Bello and Kinge (2014) that collective bargaining plays key roles in the management of industrial conflict in Taraba State Ministries. Likewise, discoveries from this research lend credence to the outcome of Ekwoba, Ideh and Ojikutu (2015) study that effective collective bargaining was a useful tool for conflict resolution in the Nigerian Universities using University of Lagos as a focus.

In addition, the findings of the study identified outrageous population of workers, statutory role of government in industrial relations, and inducement of labour unions' leaders by management in the organization as main factors that influence collective bargaining in resolving conflict in the studied company.

Conclusion

Subsequent to the findings of the study that effect of collective bargaining on industrial harmony in the Nigerian Bottling Company of Asejire Plant, Ibadan was significant, it could be concluded that management – employees’ joint negotiation or consultation and not confrontation on matters of concern are necessities for timely and effective conflict resolution in the organization as these equally guarantee needed industrial peace and harmony that are required for rapid industrial growth and prompt achievement of the firm’s set goals.

Recommendations

Consequent to the findings of the study, it is therefore recommended that:

- i. The Management of Nigerian Bottling Company in the study area should regard collective bargaining and consultation with representatives of its employees as the apparatus for resolving industrial conflicts so as to ensure industrial harmony, improve workers’ performance, heightening productivity, and boosting of its economy.
- ii. In order to sustain industrial harmony in the workplace, the management of the studied company should always give due recognition to the labour unions or associations in the organization. It should also make adoption of democratic leadership style or participatory method of administration its culture so as for the employees’ representatives to continually have a say on issues bothering on their employment rather than for the management to be making attempts to buy over or induce the unions’ leaders to have its way or achieve its aim at the expense of the general staff.

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