

Collective Bargaining And Industrial Harmony In Public Tertiary Institutions In Southwest Nigeria

By

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Abstract

This study probed into the influence of collective bargaining on industrial harmony in public tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria. The research design adopted for the study is the ex-post facto. The population comprise of all workers (teaching and non-teaching staff) in public tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria. Multi-stage random sampling technique was employed in selecting respondents for the study. The sample size of the study was seven hundred and twenty (720) staff used in public tertiary institution in south west, Nigeria. The instrument used for this study is a self-designed questionnaire which was sub divided into three sections - Section A elicited information about the respondents. These include gender, years of teaching experience, highest qualification. Section B was made up of industrial harmony questionnaire which was used to elicit information on industrial harmony while Section C is a self-structured and validated questionnaire which was used to elicit information on collective bargaining. The data was analyzed using Regression analysis and T-test, all at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that collective bargaining has significant influence and positive relationship on industrial harmony. It is therefore recommended that collective bargaining should be encouraged in all tertiary institutions in the Southwest, Nigeria and even beyond. In addition, tertiary institutions labour unions (ASUU, SSANU, NAAT and NASU) as well as the Managements of public tertiary institutions in the Southwest, Nigeria should strive to promote the principle of collective bargaining as this holds a better promise of having the demands of the unions met and also ensure industrial peace in the work place.

Keywords: Collective bargaining, Industrial harmony, Public tertiary institutions, Southwest, Nigeria.

Introduction

Instability and other forms of industrial conflict and disharmony have been experienced in recent times in Nigeria (Fejoh & Adesanwo, 2021). This development has led to low productivity in the academic institutions (Amadi & Urho, 2015; Chinedu, 2018). However, most of these problems arose from poor communication (Enyi, 2001), unceasing industrial disputes, brain-drain, under-funding or poor financing of quality education, cultism, corrupt practices and abuse of trust (Ladan, 2012; Mukoro, 2013). Industrial disharmony constitutes one of the most delicate and complex problems of the modern industrial society. The issue of industrial disharmony is attributable to the emergence of complex industrial set-up which is a direct effect of industrial revolution. The pre-industrial revolution period was characterized by a simple process of manufacturing, small scale investment, local markets and small number of persons employed which resulted to a close relationship between the manager and the managed. In Nigeria industrial systems, it is a known fact that no industrial system can function optimally without some degree of harmonious relationship among its work-force and the management. There remains growing concern about strained labour-management relations in Nigeria in the recent times. This concern arises from the need to improve relations and particularly collective bargaining process in various industrial sectors, especially the tertiary institutions across Nigeria. There is anxiety among workers of tertiary institutions bordering on government's attitude towards collective bargaining and collective agreements. Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and other trade unions in various tertiary institutions have always been at loggerhead with government over inability of the latter to sincerely see collective bargaining as a veritable tool for sustaining industrial harmony. It is either the government is not sincerely committed to the bargaining process or they are not willing to implement collective agreement reached. This paper therefore focused attention on the influence of collective bargaining on industrial harmony in public tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria.

Industrial relation is a management tool aimed at eradicating or removal of industrial disharmony with a view to ensure industrial peace and harmony. This is done through bridging the relationship gap between management and workers. When management establishes good industrial relations within an organization, cases of industrial conflict and

misunderstanding would be naturalized and peace is enthroned (Fashoyin, 2002). Due to personal and direct relationship between the employer and the employee it is easier to secure cooperation among employees in organizations as all grey areas involving any misunderstanding on the part of any of the actors or party could be handled with dispatch with positive outcomes.

Scholars like Otobo (2005) and Osad and Osas (2013) see industrial harmony as a friendly and cooperative agreement on working relationships between employers and employees for their mutual benefits. Puttapalli and Vuram (2012) in their own view perceive industrial harmony as the state of having harmonious relationship between management and employees with respect to the terms and conditions of employment and the work place. Therefore, one can safely deduce that industrial harmony refers to a situation where workers and management willingly cooperate while pursuing their organizational aims and objectives.

Odia and Omofonmwan (2007) in their view see industrial harmony as an activity that borders on obligations, employment policy, collective bargaining, communication and consultation in any organization. Industrial harmony is therefore labour productivity enhancer and as such improves education sector performance, economic growth achievement, and living standards and quality of life improvement. It promotes a peaceful working environment that is conducive to tolerance, dialogue and other alternative means of handling industrial and labour disputes in Nigeria. These include negotiation, mediation, arbitration, conciliation and court adjudication. This allows for a reliable level of employee satisfaction.

Ladan (2012) gave two major reasons why industrial harmony is imperative for a productive educational system, and the reasons are:

- a. The enhancement of labour productivity as a veritable vehicle that improves performance in the educational sector, grows the economy, and further enhance the standards of living and quality of life. Regrettably, achieving sound academic performance in educational institutions has been impaired by constant industrial disputes in Nigerian educational space.
- b. The provision of a conducive working environment that makes tolerance, dialogue and other means of handling labour disputes workable and achievable..

Collective bargaining is both a tool and a technique for managing some of the social issues that emerge in the course of work between labour and management. As Yoder and Staudohar (2002) put it, collective bargaining is important in the derivation of rules that manages the workplace, and so it is viewed as a means of industrial jurisprudence. The history of collective bargaining as a tool for organizational conflict mitigation has been well documented. Godfrey, Theron and Visser (2007) are of the view that collective bargaining is relevant to any industrial relations system due to its centrality as a tool through which regulated flexibility is accomplished.

Collective bargaining is a process of negotiations between employers and the representatives of workers in a work place with a view to reach agreements that regulate working conditions. Collective agreements which is generated as the final product arising from collective bargaining process usually cover items such as wages, working hours, safety, health, industrial democracy, training and many more labour related items in a work place. Union may bargain with a single employer or a group of employers coming under the umbrella of employers' association in order to reach a workable collective agreement. A collective agreement can be conceptualized as work contract between an employer and the workers. Collective bargaining consists of the process of negotiation between representatives of a union and employers while the major issue to be discussed is connected with terms of employment and conditions of services of workers.

Collective bargaining is vital to any industrial relations system as it is a procedure by which regulated flexibility is achieved (Godfrey et al., 2007). Literature has revealed that where employees had their employment conditions negotiated through collective bargaining and where management supported unions, there was an improved industrial relations environment (Edwards, 2002; Beardwell, Holden and Clayton 2004). Adewole and Adebola (2010) asserted that frequent disruption of industrial harmony between employers and employees in general can be effectively reduced through collective negotiation and consultation with the workers' representatives. Collective bargaining has been noted to help promote cooperation and mutual understanding between workers and management by providing a framework for dealing with industrial relations issues without resort to strike and

lockouts. Therefore, fair and legal process will result in successful collective bargaining, hence maintenance of industrial discipline and peace and vice-versa (Gomez-Mejia, Balkin, and Cardy, 2003).

According to Cole (2002), collective bargaining procedure starts with the union demand which is followed by an initial counter offer from management. Once management's initial response has been made, then negotiation can commence in earnest. Cole further explains that in most cases, an agreement is reached without undue delay and acrimony, and the agreed terms of the settlement are published, implemented and subsequently monitored. Both sides therefore need to determine their overall objectives or strategy, assess their relative bargaining strength, and, in the light of that assessment, decide on the tactics to be employed to achieve the desired result.

Statement of the Problem

The need for harmonious relationship among management and workers of tertiary institutions in Nigeria on how best to promote and maintain workers job satisfaction and productivity has attracted the attention of the management of both public and private tertiary institutions. This is because, it is a fact that industrial harmony is very crucial to the survival of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Lack of industrial harmony in any tertiary institution may arise due to industrial conflict which may lead to strike action. Strike action shows a breakdown of harmonious relationship between the workers represented by the labour unions and government (as employer) or university management. Strike may be used to effect a change in the function and structure of tertiary institutions and collective bargaining can therefore be described as the industrial machinery for straightening and strengthening the relationship between the unions and the university management.

Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and other trade unions in various tertiary institutions have always been at loggerhead with government over inability of the latter to sincerely see collective bargaining as a veritable tool for sustaining industrial harmony. It is either the government is not sincerely committed to the bargaining process or they are not willing to implement collective agreement reached. This paper therefore

examined the influence of collective bargaining on industrial harmony in public tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria.

3. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are stated in null forms to guide this study;

H₀1: There is no significant influence of collective bargaining on industrial harmony in public tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria.

H₀2: There is no significant relationship between collective bargaining and industrial harmony in public tertiary institutions in Southwest Nigeria.

H₀3: There is no significant influence of collective bargaining on strike actions in public tertiary institutions in Southwest Nigeria.

4. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine the influence of collective bargaining on industrial harmony in public tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria. Specifically, the study also to achieve the following objectives:

1. Determine the relationship between collective bargaining and industrial harmony in public tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria.
2. Examine the influence of collective bargaining on strike action in public tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria.

5. Methodology

Design

The study employed the ex-post-facto research design, because the researcher was only interested in finding the influence and relationship of the independent variable and the dependent variable without necessarily manipulating it in any form.

Participants

The population consists of all workers (teaching and non-teaching staff) in public tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria. There are six states that made of southwest geographic zone in Nigeria which are Lagos State, Ogun State, Oyo State, Osun State, Ondo

State and Ekiti State respectively. A multi-stage random sampling technique was adopted to select respondents for the study

Stage 1: Simple random sampling technique was adopted to select two universities (One Federal and One state) from each of the states in Southwest, Nigeria. Lagos State (University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos and Lagos State University, Ojoo); Ogun State (Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta and Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun); Oyo State (University of Ibadan, Ibadan and Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomosho); Osun State (Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and Osun State University, Osogbo); Ondo State (Federal University of Technology, Akure and Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko) and Ekiti State (Federal University, Oye-Ekiti and Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti).

Stage 2: Thirty (30) teaching staff and thirty (30) non-teaching staff were randomly selected from each of the selected universities using purposive random sampling technique, making a total number of one hundred and twenty staff (120) from each state selected for the study.

Stage 3: Stratified random sampling technique was used in selecting 15 male and 15 female teaching staff and 15 male and 15 non teaching staff from each of the selected universities.

The sample size of the study was seven hundred and twenty (720) staff of the selected public tertiary institution in Southwest, Nigeria.

Instrument

This study adopted questionnaire as the instrument for data gathering. The questionnaire was sub divided into three sections:

Section A contained information relating to the respondents. These include gender, years of teaching experience, highest qualification. Section B dealt with industrial harmony items which was used to elicit information on industrial harmony while Section C was a self-structured and validated questionnaire which was used to elicit information on collective bargaining as the other variable of the study

Data Collection Procedure

The instruments were administered in all the selected tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria, after seeking necessary permissions from school authorities. The researcher with two (2) trained research assistant administered the instruments to the participants. All copies were retrieved the same day to avoid loss of instrument.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using T-test and Regression analysis, all at 0.05 level of significance.

6. Results

Hypothesis One: There is no significant influence of collective bargaining on industrial harmony in public tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria

Table 1: Regression analysis of collective bargaining on industrial harmony

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	84.667	1	42.334	79.208
	n	51.843	718		
	Residual	136.510	719	0.534	
	Total				

R = 0.788^a

R² = 0.620

Adj. R² = 0.022

a. Dependent Variable: Industrial harmony

b. Predictors: (Constant), Collective bargaining

Table 1 above revealed that collective bargaining and industrial harmony yielded a coefficient of regressions (R) of 0.788 and a regression square of 0.620. This shows that 0.4% of the total variance of industrial harmony is accounted for by collective bargaining. The table also indicates that the analysis of variance of the regression data produced an F-ratio value of 79.208, significant at 0.05 level. This means that collective bargaining has significant influence on industrial harmony. Therefore, null hypothesis formulated is hereby rejected in lieu of the alternate hypothesis which states that there is significant influence of collective bargaining on industrial harmony in public tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between collective bargaining and industrial harmony in public tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria.

Table 2: Relationship between bargaining on industrial harmony

Variables	N	Mean	S.D	Pearson (r)	Sig.
Collective bargaining	720	47.36	7.128		
Industrial harmony	720	59.07	9.227	.687*	0.006 ^b

a. Dependent Variable: Industrial harmony

b. Predictors: (Constant), Collective bargaining

Table 2 above revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between collective bargaining and industrial harmony of staff in public tertiary institution. The table shows mean score of 47.36 for collective bargaining and 59.07 for industrial harmony among staff. Also, the table shows r value of 0.687 (Sig= 006) which is an indication of positive and significant relationship between collective bargaining and industrial harmony of students. Hence, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between collective bargaining and industrial harmony in public tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria is rejected, in lieu of the alternate hypothesis which state that there is significant relationship between collective bargaining and industrial harmony in public tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant influence of collective bargaining on strike actions in public tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria.

Table 3: Regression analysis of collective bargaining on strike actions in public tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria

R ² = 0.542				
Adjusted R ² = 0.537				
F-Statistic = 116.049				
Parameter	Coefficient	Standard Error	T-cal	Probability
Constant	35.44	1.765	20.061	0.000
Strike	0.67	0.065	10.773	0.000

In table 3 above, collective bargaining accounts for 54.2% of the total variation of strike actions ($R^2 = 0.542$, $F = 116.049$, $P < 0.05$). This is significant, thus, the null hypothesis which state that there is no significant influence of collective bargaining on strike actions in public tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria was rejected in lieu of the alternate hypothesis that state there is no significant influence of collective bargaining on strike actions in public tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria.

7. Discussion

The result as shown in Table 1 corroborates Gomez-Mejia et al. (2003) position that collective bargaining foster cooperation and good understanding between employees and management by providing a structure for managing industrial relations issues without resort to strike and lockouts. Therefore, fair and legal process will result in successful negotiations, hence maintenance of industrial harmony and peace and vice-versa. Also, the findings confirmed the position of Chidi (2014) who in his study affirmed that labour unions that engage in collectively bargaining with management seeks to ensure that its legitimate demands that are related to labour issues that cover items such as, salaries, emoluments, and other conditions of work are met and implemented so that their continuous existence in the work place is guaranteed.

Findings from Table 2 indicated that there is a significant positive relationship between collective bargaining and industrial harmony. It was first observed that the causes of industrial disputes in the public tertiary institutions range from workers dissatisfaction with the condition of service, such as delay in payment of salary and statutory promotion, non-involvement of staff in decision making, as well as, ineffective communication between management and workers. This is explainable in the sense that refusal to appreciate the human factor in the work place as revealed poor conditions of service remain a major cause of industrial disharmony. These show the discontentment of employees and the aggression of workers in demanding for improved working conditions for workers. It has to be stated that management in this 21st century must find workable approach to handle the problems of employees' service conditions through collective bargaining process as conflict handling strategy. Corroborating this, Dunlop (1958) and Flanders (1965) confirmed that collective bargaining actually aided employers and employees to come up with a better way to resolve their differences and enjoy conducive and harmonious work environment.

Finally, Table 3 affirmed that there is significant influence of strike on collective bargaining and industrial harmony in public tertiary institutions in Southwest Nigeria, it was observed that the unguaranteed collective bargaining in any organization breeds industrial dispute. The finding is in line with the submission of Owoseni (2014) who confirmed that industrial conflict arises when after tortuous and exhausting negotiation process, the parties can still not get to the point of having a collective agreement and trade union will then have no other viable option than to commence industrial actions instead of continuing to negotiate. It is also in consonance with the findings of Ekwoaba, Ideh and Ojikwu (2012). They affirmed that collective bargaining is a sound instrument for the handling of conflict in organizations.

The finding further strengthens the study carried out by Akpa and Namse (2016) where they asserted that collective bargaining helps divert the energy that would have be used by workers in developing strategies on how to confront employers or government towards its performance which leads to efficiency and increase in productivity. In the opinion of Awe and Ayeni (2013) trade dispute does not only lead to low productivity but also reduction in the level of output and increase in average cost due to work stoppage. Collective bargaining can lead to higher performance of the employees when there is no dispute among

them (Inya, 2015), Anyim, Tunde and Gbajumo-Sheriff (2006) argued that collective bargaining is the main machinery by workers representatives and their employees not only to consider the demand of workers but also to resolve conflict in order to achieve organizational goals and objectives. It breeds atmosphere of mutual trust, confidence, cooperation harmonious relationship among employers, management and workers (Akpan and Namse, 2016); increased workers morale and commitment towards meeting performance target of public organizations (Bello and Kinge, 2014).

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

Industrial disharmony has been a major problem in Nigerian tertiary institution sector with alarming dimensions recently being added to the problem. There has always been series of blame shifting games on the part of both the government (as employer) and the workers of these public tertiary institutions. Government has always accuse the workers through their unions of economic sabotage whenever they go on strike, while the unions have always cry foul of government unwillingness to either engage them in meaningful collective bargaining process or outright failure in implementing collective agreement jointly reached. This study examined the influence of collective bargaining on industrial harmony in public tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria and it was able to find out that effective use of collective bargaining as an industrial relations tool have the capacity to ensure industrial harmony in public tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria.

The following recommendations were made based on the above findings and conclusion.

1. Collective bargaining should be seen and adopted by both the government and the unions as an appropriate mean of settling disputes in other to avoid disharmony in all public tertiary institutions in Southwest, Nigeria.
- ii. Public tertiary institutions unions in Southwest, Nigeria should key into and promote the principles of collective bargaining instead of embarking on incessant strike actions that would disrupt the school academic calendar thereby disrupting industrial harmony and inadvertently affect productivity in these institutions.

- iii. It is also recommended that union leaders should update their knowledge and skills in collective bargaining process in order to ensure that they are able to wrestle positively during collective bargaining process which will promote harmony within school environment.
- iv. Government and public tertiary institution management should also learn to respect and honour collective agreement jointly reached in order to build trust and confidence in industrial relations process which could always bring in harmony within the school environment.

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