

Industrial Conflict and organisational Performance: A Study of Oil Companies in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of industrial conflict on organizational performance of oil companies in Rivers State. The study population is made up of 12,258 workers selected from the six majors oil companies in Rivers State, while Taro Yamane's formula was used to determine the sample size of 387 employees. Data were elicited via structured questionnaire administration. In order to confirm the reliability of the instrument used, Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.9 minimum bench-mark was observed. Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to test the hypotheses. Analysis of all the data elicited from the respondents indicates that Industrial conflict positively and significantly relates with organizational performance of oil firms in Rivers state. Specifically, lockout reported the highest impact on firms' operations. The study further concludes that industrial conflict strongly influenced organizational performance of oil companies in Rivers State. From the conclusion, the study recommends among others that oil companies should develop plans suitable to investigate issues that would lead to conflict in their respective firms and management should apply more than one conflict resolvable strategy in order to prevent lockouts and strikes.

Keywords: *Industrial conflicts, strikes, lockouts, organizational performance, market share, growth.*

INTRODUCTION

The continuous and effective functioning of organizational resources (both human and material) largely depend on the knowledge and drive towards the achievement of firm's objectives (growth, profit, market shares etc). However, employees who are seen as the means through which organizational objectives are achieved, do not usually agree or conform to the administrative processes and philosophy of the organization. This situation often results into various forms of industrial conflicts. Azamosa (2004) views conflict as a sum of behavioral and attitudinal differences arising between business owners and their workforce which creates conflict situation in the organization. It is a form of aggressiveness exhibited from issues of utmost concern emanating from suspicion, anger and other personality related issues. As noted by Adomi and Anie (2005), conflict is an inevitable aspect of organizational existence as a result of the competition existing among individual

on issues relating to resource usage, distribution of power, allocation of jobs, recognition as well as security. Conflict situations do occur in the organization as individuals communicate and contend for the use of limited resources at organizational disposal.

However, organizations apply similar means of handling conflict related to what society uses. In most social gathering, when conflicts arise, it is being quelled by members of the society such as friends, family members, relatives through some set of laws and norms that guides the conduct of groups' members in the society. Conflict arising from the organization is to be handled carefully and in the most realistic manner despite the cause or issues relating to such disagreement, as the outcomes usually have enormous influence either positively or negatively in the life of the organization.

In Nigeria, the rate of industrial conflict is so worrisome as a results of its devastating effects on the operations and growth of businesses that it has become an issue of concern to firms operating in the oil industry in Rivers state. At present, most companies in Nigeria, usually encounter various forms of relational and intrapersonal conflicts that they spent most of their time as well interest on conflict related issues, thus viewing conflict as the core of organizational operation (Ojiele, 2003). This situation occurs as a result of the ineffective conflict handling strategy adopted by those in the leadership of labour unions in Nigeria who do not systematically manage conflicts the way manpower, information and financial techniques were managed. Thus, conflict is being perceived as an uncomplicated human occurrence and as well has being slowly handled with levity. In most organizations conflict is said to have had devastating effect when these organizations exhibit insufficient capabilities in understanding industrial conflict (Ojiele, 2003). This has resulted into high rate of absenteeism, job mobility, poor productivity, low morale, strikes, unhealthy competition among departments and workers, industrial accidents, workplace sabotage just to mention but a few etc and has eventually lead to organizational inefficiency. Against this background, the study intends to empirically examine the effects of industrial disputes on the operations of companies operating in the crude oil sector. Hence, the purpose of the study is to investigate the relationships between industrial dispute and organizational performance of oil companies operating in Rivers State.

Research Questions

- I. What is the relationship between strike action and growth of oil companies in Rivers state?
- II. What is the relationship between strike action and productivity of oil companies in Rivers State?
- III. What is the relationship between strike actions and market shares of oil companies in Rivers State?
- IV. What is the relationship between lockout actions and growth of oil companies in Rivers State?
- V. What is the relationship between lockouts and productivity of oil companies in Rivers State?
- VI. What is the relationship between lockouts and market shares of oil companies in Rivers State?

Statement of Hypotheses

The following hypotheses below were stated in their null form to guide the study, thus:

- H₀₁** There is no significant relationship between strike action and growth of firms operating in the oil sector in Rivers State.
- H₀₂** There is no significant relationship between strike actions and productivity of firms operating in the oil sector in Rivers State.
- H₀₃** There is no significant relationship between strike actions and market share of firms operating in the oil sector in Rivers State.
- H₀₄** There is no significant relationship between lockout action and growth of firms operating in the oil sector in Rivers State.
- H₀₅** There is no significant relationship between lockout action and productivity of firms operating in the oil sector in Rivers State.
- H₀₆** There is no significant relationship between lockout actions and market share of firms operating in the oil sector in Rivers State.

Furthermore, the remaining part of this study is divided into four sections. Firstly, review of related literature. The second section describes the methodology while the third section was used for data analysis and results. The last section consists of conclusions and recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical foundation

The study hinges on the works of Karl Marx (1818-1883) a German Sociologist on the theory of Historical Materialism based on the notion of class conflict. The

theory gives materialistic explanation of historical events, dialectic analytical method and political struggle leading to rebellion or reorganization of society based on collective agreement. According to Marx's view, capitalists (employers) decide how humans relates as well as how social activities are been arranged. Marx asserts that economic activities have enormous influence in determining social existence. In other words, industrial outcomes determine social life, especially those economic activities that provide basis for human existence like food, house as well as clothes. According to Marx's view, all other facets of human existence to a great extent depends on how economic activity are been organized and the technology employed in the production of goods and services. He believes that all aspects of value creation in the society absolutely depends on the product of human labour. Marx views industrial culture on the basis of individual objects, an arrangement in which few individuals from the entire population actually control productive capacity of the society. This categorized society into two contending parties. On one side of the stratum are the bourgeoisie, commonly referred to as the capitalist class who owns the means of production and distribution, while on the other extreme are those individuals or group of people usually referred to as the proletariats (working class) that supply their services to the business owners (entrepreneur) for wages. Industrial conflicts arise between employees and the industrialists in the oil companies in Nigeria when one party (usually the working class) perceive some form of exploitations from the capitalist class regarding the arrangement of pay and other work related benefits.

The theory posits that globally changes frequently occur in most business enterprises and that the changes are mostly motivated through class conflict. Thus, industrial conflict that usually occur between the working class and the capitalists in the oil sectors in Nigeria are often believed to be the attributes of private sectors continuous superiority that replicates the key influence of capitalist and class relationships.

Conceptual Review

Industrial Conflict

Employers and employees usually encounter disagreement in the workplace as a result of the varied expectation held by both parties regarding industrial arrangement. Naturally, conflict is believed to be a continuous observable occurrence of every aspect of human existence. Buttressing on the views above, Ajala (2003) and Alimba (2010) posit that conflict is bound to occur in all sphere

of human existence that some individuals view its inaccessibility as the basis for accurate social life. The desire for divergent objectives, aspirations and importance by an individual or groups of individuals within a given society often leads to the idea of widespread conflicts in all aspect of human existence. Though, conflict is generally believed to be extraordinarily dysfunctional, destructive, unpleasant and abnormal situation, it is equally seen as an avenue for constructive occurrence if handled in a positive manner (Edwards, 2003; Hammed & Ayantunji, 2003).

However, the concept of conflict has been understood by various scholars in various context denoting different meaning. Conflict is an association existing between individuals or group of individuals constituting a social unit who may have believed of possessing conflicting goals (Fisher & Gitelson, 2004). Consatino, Cathy and Merchant (1995) view conflict as a means through which individuals express their anger, disagreement and unsatisfied needs with perceived organizational benefits. Otite (2001) averred that conflict is a means through which issues originating from differing interest as well as issues relating to social stability are been resolved.

Industrial conflict as opined by Fajana (2000) is the inability to reach an agreement between employers and employees or their unions over terms of industrial relations, without the considering if the lack of such ability will result into negative industrial actions or not. Similarly, industrial conflict is seen as the total manifestation of anger displayed by service unions, especially those involve in wage agreement with the motive of making better bargain (Onyeonoru, 2005). Though, conflicts are expressed in different forms in the workplace ranging from absenteeism, sabotage, work to rule, organizational unrest, as well as strikes and lockout, the most widely exhibited form of conflict existing in the work organization is strike.

Strike

Strike indicates negative action displayed towards work and refers to the refusal or stoppage of work by a group of employees acting in agreement with mutual understanding in order to compel an employer yield to their demands as stated in the terms of employment. The description above has some key elements: (i) it indicates negative action towards work, (ii) the actions are concentrated towards set objectives. Organizational performance is greatly influence by industrial actions embarked upon by employees because of the wastage of productive time on the part of the organization.

Forms of Strikes

There are various forms of strike but most notably as indicated by Poole (1980), include:

1. **Wildcat Strike:** This kind of strike occurs when there is infringement or breach in the terms of condition reached by parties and it is not often formally approved by the parties since management weren't informed or notified before such action, took place.
2. **Sit-Down Strike:** A form of strike involves sit and watch action at the workplace agreed upon by employees without necessarily engaging on any form of official assignment.
3. **Constitutional Strike:** This form of strike involves actions taking to comply with the rules to the usual process of the employment agreement. These agreements clearly define the time and procedure involved in before employees will embark on protest against management's failure on employment contracts (cease work).
4. **Unconstitutional Strikes:** This form of strike action involves obstructing firms' operation or demonstration that is in disobedience to the laws required by mutual agreement or the relevant public guiding principles.
5. **Unofficial Strike:** This form of strike is usually not supported by management. This ensue as a result of the mistrust union members have against management which eventually leads to express demand on management without considering if such action is supported by those in control of their agitation or at the helm of affairs.
6. **Official Strike:** This form of strike action is formally endorsed by management.

Lockouts

Lockouts are directly related to employers and it is seen as a direct opposite to strike action at the workplace. It is an official agreement reached by management to deliberately shut down operations at the workplace or a deliberate attempt to deny workers productivity in order to compel employees or support other organization in inducing their employees to accept the terms of employment contract. The consequences of strikes and lockouts are detrimental to the industry and the nation's economy because they lead to lose of production (Mamoria, 2011). Lockout could manifest in form of machine shutdown, premises lockdown and personnel lockdown.

Organization Performance (OP)

The concept of performance has become a contentious issue in the field of management, though central in management literature. Carton (2004) viewed organizational performance as organization effectiveness in achieving objectives with the support of its resources. Nwachukwu (2009), viewed organizational performance as firms' ability in combining available human and material resources effectively for the purpose of achieving better outcomes during competition and other economic variable. Though, studies have proven that organizational performance as a construct has various dimension (Combs, Crook & Shook, 2015), the dimensions adopted varies and lies on the method of analysis, source of data as well as the measures used. Generally, organizations ascertain the level of their performances using three key indicators, these include: financial performance (profits, returns on assets, returns on investment etc), shareholder value (total shareholders' returns, economic value added, etc) and Product market performance (Richard, Devinney, Yip & Johnson, 2009). This study, employs growth, productivity and market shares as the measures of organizational performance.

Market Share

Czinkota et al (1997) as cited in Amah (2013), views market shares as a percentage of the sales in a given market. Vora & Jay, (1992) on their own reacted that sellers need to be smart in order to understand and put together their business goals into market share as it has the ability of exposing whether forecast will be achieved relatively to business development or by brainstorming from competitors. Kotler and Armstrong (2001) as cited in Amah (2013) reveals that increase in market shares will eventually leads to an increase in organization's profits, since market shares is one of the most important objective of firms. In other words, market share is a key indicator of market aggressiveness—that is, it is an indicator of the well-being of an enterprise relatively to its competitors. As noted by Ojielo (2003), market shares allow entrepreneurs determine either aggregate growth or decline of their customer base as well as trends among competing firms.

Market share as an indicator of organizational performance is of absolute necessity in that, it allows organizations get familiarized with the potentiality of their position in a given market either as leader or minor player as well as if a given organization is actually gaining, losing or in control of shares in a given market (Kotler, 1999 as cited in Amah, 2013).

Productivity

Amah, Daminabo, & Dosunmu (2013), described productivity as an indicator of the efficiency and effectiveness of resources generated and utilized in creating physical and intangible products of value, desired by consumers. However, higher productivity indicates that capitals are efficiently and effectively utilized and wastage were at minimum. Firms develop when there is growth in productivity. Productivity can be viewed technically which describes and subjects it to empirical investigation. It can also be evaluated in nomothetic terms, which further makes it an observable factor.

Growth

Organizations irrespective of the size all desire to increase in size relatively in the number of product lines, sales, physical expansion, number of employees as well as increase in market shares. However, growth is most likely determined by how an organization operates relatively to desired set of objectives. As opined by Mujahid and Satyendra (2000), organizational growth potentially provides businesses with many benefits ranging from increased authority, higher survival rates, higher profit margin, power to surmount market fluctuations, efficiency from economies of scale, to higher status earned by its members. Many organizations desired growth because of its potentiality in ascertaining the success as well as progress, consequently growth takes place if organizations desire to keep up with trends and technology. Thus, growth is seen as an indicator to firms' effectiveness which most practicing managers crave for.

Pagano and Schivardi (2003), posited that organization growth is a process of introducing innovation and is a philosophy of technical revolution. For instance, if a company intends surviving in very fierce competitive market, it will keep introducing innovative know-how in line with the supplementary competences.

Empirical Review

Ilevbare, Ojeleye and Ilevbare (2012) conducted a study on influence of industrial conflict on perceived employee work performance in selected local government area in Osun State. Ex-post facto research design was used in the study. One hundred and fifty (150) workers were drawn from three selected Local Government Secretariats (Irewole, Isokan and Ayedaade) in Osun state, Nigeria. In all, eighty-five (85) were the total participants. Five hypotheses were tested in the course of the study. The result obtained revealed that there was a significant relationship

between industrial conflict and perceived work performance. Similarly, there is no significant relationship between age of employee and perceived work performance. The third hypothesis indicated that there is no significant gender difference on the perceived work performance. The fourth hypothesis indicated that employee grade level has a significant relationship on the perceived work performance. Finally, the fifth hypothesis indicated that there was a significant relationship between employee lengths of service on perceived work performance.

Nwaogu (2012) examined the influence of strike action on employee's performance and productivity. The aim of the study was to ascertain the relationship between strike action (causes of strike, delay in payment, perception of strike and practical solution to strike problems) and employee performance and productivity. Survey research design was used. The population involve 12,000 employees and the sample size is 746. Questionnaire and interview were used as the instrument for data collection. The instrument for data analysis is Chi-square method of testing of hypothesis and simple percentages of analyzing the tables. Findings revealed that causes of strike were linked to delay in payment, communication disruption, resource scarcity and management leadership; There is a strong relationship between strike action and employee's performance/productivity.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts the quasi-experimental design since the study elements are humans and are not under the control of the researcher. The population of the study involves 12,258 employees selected from six (6) major oil firms operating in Rivers state. They include: Shell Petroleum Development Company (3,301), Chevron (2,477), Nigerian Agip Oil Company (1,080), Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas (1,500), ELF/TOTAL (2,700) as well as SAIPEM Nig. Ltd (1,200). However, 387 employees were drawn from the population through Taro Yamane's formula which becomes the sample size of the study. Data were collected through structured questionnaire with the aid of Likert's five (5) points scale ranging from strongly Disagree '1' to Strongly Agree '5'. The questionnaire enables the respondents to understand the intention of the study. It also enables the researcher to obtain information from the respondents easily (Asika, 2004). However, reliability of the instrument was ascertained through Cronbach's alpha coefficient with the aid of SPSS, and the result indicated above 0.80. Santos (1999) opined that a value of 0.70 and above indicates that the research instrument is reliable. Data were analyzed

using Spearman rank order correlation coefficient with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results on the association between Strike and the measures of Organizational Performance

		Strike	Growth	Productivity	Market Share
Spearman's rho	Strike				
	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.775**	.763**	.776**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
	N	329	329	329	329
	Growth				
	Correlation Coefficient	.775**	1.000	.860**	.543**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
	N	329	329	329	329
	Productivity				
	Correlation Coefficient	.763**	.860**	1.000	.561**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	329	329	329	329
Market Share					
Correlation Coefficient	.776**	.543**	.561**	1.000	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.	
N	329	329	329	329	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS 21.0 data Output, June 2017

Based on the results presented in Table 1., with r value = 0.775, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ indicates that there exists a significant relationship between strike and growth of oil firms operating in Rivers State. Similarly, with r value = 0.763, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ shows that there exists a significant relationship between strike and productivity of oil firms in Rivers State. Finally, with r value = 0.0776, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ indicates

that there exists a significant relationship between strike and market share of oil companies in Rivers State. Thus, all the null hypotheses earlier stated were all rejected confirming the existence of significant association between strike actions and the measures of organizational performance.

Results on the association between Lockouts and the measures of organizational performance.

Table 2. Correlation results for Lockouts and the measures of organizational performance:

			Lockout	Growth	Productivity	Market Share
Spearman's rho	Lockout	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.819**	.830**	.504**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	329	329	329	329
	Growth	Correlation Coefficient	.819**	1.000	.860**	.543**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	329	329	329	329
	Productivity	Correlation Coefficient	.830**	.860**	1.000	.561**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	329	329	329	329
	Market Share	Correlation Coefficient	.504**	.543**	.561**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	329	329	329	329

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS 21.0 data Output, June 2017

The results shown in Table 2., with r value = 0.819 indicates that there exist a strong positive association between lockout and growth of oil firms in Rivers state. Similarly, with r value = 0.830 shows that there exist a strong positive association between lockouts and productivity oil firms in Rivers state. Finally, with r value = 0.504 indicates that there exist a positive association between Lockouts and Market share of oil companies in Rivers State. However, the association were significant at $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ level of significance; thus the previously stated null hypotheses were all rejected to confirmed that there exist a significant association between lockouts and measures of organizational performance.

However, these findings are in support with the views of Ilevbare, Ojeleye and Ilevbare (2012) who posit that there exists a significant relationship between industrial conflict and work performance. Angry workers are capable of doing anything possible to frustrate the organization once they sense that the management is not yielding to their demands (Higgins, 2003; Thomas, 2009). Also, the findings are in support with some previous studies who view lockout as a stoppage of operations which affects inflow and outflow of cash, raw materials, etc., thus, hindering productivity (Onah, 2010; Idemobi, et al 2017; Olu & Abolade, 2016). The company may decide to lockout personnel or shutdown machine due to incompetence, underutilization of the equipment and perceived low output Zeb-Obipi, (2018). The consequences of lockouts are detrimental to the industry and the nation's economy because they lead to lose in production and productive efforts (Mamoria, 2011; Lawrence, 2016; Yusuf et al, 2015). However, the results suggest policy recommendations for government as well as managements of oil companies in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

Based on the results of the findings, the study concludes that industrial conflicts affect the performance oil companies operating in Rivers State. Specifically, the study concludes that there is a significant relationship between Strike actions and the measures of organizational performance (Growth, Productivity and Market shares) of oil companies in Rivers state. Also, there is a significant relationship between Lock out actions and the measures of organizational performance (Growth, Productivity and Market shares) of oil companies in Rivers state.

From the conclusion, the study recommends that: Companies operating in the oil sector should develop sufficient plans necessary to determine dispute in their

respective firms. Management should always be sensitive and respond quickly to situations that may likely lead to strike and lockouts, as they have the capability of influencing industrial activities. In addition, management should use more than one conflict resolving plan that will act as a preventive measure in averting strike and lockout because they hinder performance. Finally, conflict control techniques or measures should be communicated to all parties involved most especially employees.

LIMITATION AND FUTURE STUDIES

The study faced some cultural limitation because respondents of the target population were mainly drawn in a particular state of a region in the country which makes it difficult to generalize the results of the study to oil companies in other states and regions of the country as well as other culture and countries. Future research may focus on other states and regions of the country in order to find out if the results of the findings may be repeated in those regions or cultures. Also, the study mainly focused on two dimensions of industrial dispute (strikes and lockouts) and three measures of performance (growth, productivity and market shares), whereas, there are other measures of performance which could generate a comparable results or dissimilar results when been carried out in similar sector or different organization; hence, future research may consider other measures of organizational performance.

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