



Collective Bargaining as an Instrument of Conflict Management and Workers' Productivity in Manufacturing Companies in Cross River State - Nigeria.

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of collective bargaining as an instrument of conflict management on workers' productivity in selected manufacturing companies in Cross River State, Nigeria. One null hypothesis was formulated for the study and ex-post facto design was adopted. A sample of 504 respondents was randomly selected from nineteen manufacturing companies operating in the study area. A modified four point Likert questionnaire consisting of two sections (A and B) constructed by the researchers was used for data collection. Section A contained items on conflict management strategy in terms of collective bargaining, and section B contained items on workers' productivity. The data collected were analyzed using simple linear regression analysis and the results were tested at .05 probability level. The finding showed that collective bargaining significantly influence workers' productivity in companies understudy. Based on the finding it was recommended that conflict in whatever form should not be ignored but be effectively managed collectively for better employees' productivity in the workplace.

Keywords: Collective bargaining, instrument, conflict management, workers' productivity, and manufacturing companies.

Introduction

The Nigerian industrial relations system has been overwhelmed by the incessant industrial conflicts which have manifested in strike actions by workers in different sectors of the economy. The relationship between employers and employees is inherently conflicting and as such cannot be overlooked by the social partners in industrial relations. To show that conflict cannot be avoided by any management either in public or private sector, Fasom (2011) explained that workers at all times will seek for what is commensurate to their input in their organizations in terms of labour and time while employers on their part will seek for the talent, skills and potentials of workers and in return reciprocate the workers' efforts monetarily to such extent that could not affect their profit margins. These relationships between the employers and employees are naturally conflicting because what is gained to the workers in terms of wages is seen as cost by the employers. Therefore conflict between the workers and their employers is inevitable in organization.

Lemony (2002) views collective bargaining as the mechanism that furthers basic union purposes on behalf of workers to protect them as opposed to an individual worker representing him or himself. As far as they are concerned, collective bargaining de-emphasizes individualism but encourages collectivism between employers and their employees. He noted that, the international labour organization made it clearer when it insisted that collective bargaining is negotiation of working conditions and terms of employment between employers, a group of employers or one or more employers' organization on one hand, and one or more representatives of workers' organization on the other hand. This is with a view of reaching an agreement on working conditions and terms of employment and or regulating relations between employers or their organizations and workers' organizations. According to him, collective bargaining is the core value that is linked to the freedom of association and the right to strike.

According to Rose (2008), collective bargaining is the representatives of employers and employees who jointly determine and regulate decisions pertaining to both substantive and procedural matters within the employment relationship through collective agreement. In her opinion, collective bargaining establishes the set rules guiding relationship between parties during the life of a collective agreement, and also gives method of setting grievances that will occur from time to time. She noted that, collective bargaining is a form of industrial jurisprudence and industrial democracy because it is used to resolve workplace conflict between labour and management and allow workers participate in the decision making process of the organization.

Anyim, Elegbede and Gbajumo-Sheri (2011) opined that collective bargaining is the main machinery that workers' representatives and their employers use to not only consider the demands of workers but also to resolve conflict so as to achieve the organization's goals and objectives. They further explain that collective bargaining covers negotiation between workers group and employers as against individual bargaining. They noted that collective bargaining performs three functions; as a means of contracting for sale of labour, as a form of industrial government, and a method of management. The study concluded that collective bargaining is a means of buying labour in the labour market with the use of employment contract, having rule making process that governs trade unions and management relationship especially in the areas of reaching decisions on matters of interest to all social partners.

Similarly, Anyim, Ikemuefuma and Ogunyomi (2011) note that in all industrial relations system there are disagreements and disputes among various contending interests and collective bargaining democratic principles are required to resolve the disagreement and disputes as to have industrial harmony and peace. They maintain that collective bargaining is the process of resolving industrial conflicts in every industrial relations system.

The source further emphasizes that collective bargaining is adopted to avoid industrial conflict via determination of working conditions and terms of employment between the employer(s) and workers' representatives. The source further concluded that collective bargaining plays the major role of resolving industrial conflicts by permitting decisions on salaries, hours of labour and working conditions to be made jointly between employee and employer representatives through collective agreement which has significant positive impact on productivity.

Productivity is an index of the technical or engineering efficiency of production. He further contends that, productivity is distinct from materials of allocative efficiency which take into account both the value of what is produced and cost of inputs used, and as a distinction of indices of profitability which addresses the difference between the revenues obtained from output and the expenses associated with consumption of inputs (Saari, 2006). This means that, the effectiveness and efficiency of organization to produce goods at cheaper rate is a proof of its ability to stay in the manufacturing world. When organizations are able to pay salaries, service their loan facilities, declare profits at the end of the year, it means such organizations are doing well.

Okenwa (2008) asserts that, productivity is how efficient a certain output of goods or services are produced or rendered and the value created by the production process. It is a relationship of how an organization converts input in the form of resources, labour, material, machinery into goods and services. Sink (1984) argues that productivity in service-oriented industries like services of banks, power holdings of Nigeria is the different way quantitative services are provided to the consumers. Generally, productivity may be conceived as average level of production which is seen as a balance point where profit and cost are at equilibrium. A good leader's managerial style can help monitor productivity targets by personalizing his relationship with his workers by making them feel he is their friend and considering them as partners in progress, not as servants. He should give his

employees the opportunity to feel free and communicate with them about organizational policies. The leader should lavish praises, cheers and favourable remarks to spur his workers. The prolong collective bargaining process between employers and employees hinders the smooth and peaceful co-existence between them which has significant negative impact on productivity. This usually ends in strikes and lockouts by the workers. This paper therefore investigates the extent to which collective bargaining strategy of conflict management influence companies' workers' productivity in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

Quite visibly, most organizations have devoted a greater part of their time and effort to settle conflict related issues. The scenario has continued unabated, hence posing a negative challenge to industrial and economic growth of an organization. Although, conflict cannot be completely ruled out in any organization but then, frequent occurrence of organizational conflict could have an adverse effect on the organization in terms of cost of production hour, reduction in profits, unemployment and, of course, reduction in income level of the organization. Just like any other organization, companies in Cross River State are still confronted with various forms of conflict both interpersonal and task conflicts. The companies have also been criticized that they do not live up to expectation of the public due to their poor productivity. To this end, the paper sought to investigate the extent to which collective bargaining influence workers' productivity in manufacturing companies in Cross River State.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of collective bargaining as conflict management strategy on company workers' productivity in Cross River State.

Research question

To what extent does conflict management through collective bargaining influence company workers’ productivity in Cross River State.

Research hypothesis

There is no significant influence of collective bargaining on company workers’ productivity in Cross River State.

Methodology

The study adopted the ex-post facto design with a sample of 504 respondents proportionately selected from nineteen recognized manufacturing companies operating in the study area. This represents 20% of each of the companies’ population. A modified four-point Likert questionnaire consisting of two sections, Section A contained items on conflict management strategy in terms of collective bargaining, and section B contained items on workers’ productivity whose responses were highly satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied and highly dissatisfied.

Results

The result of the study is presented in table 1 below as follows:

Table 1: Simple linear regression result of the influence of collective bargaining strategy on company workers’ productivity in Cross River State.

Source of variance	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F-rat
Regression	2762.02	1	2762.02	42.26
Residual	28891.68	497	65.37	
Total	31653.70	498		

$R = .295; R^2 = .087$

The result presented in Table 1 shows that, the coefficient of regression R of .295 is an indication that there is a positive relationship between collective bargaining in conflict management and company workers’ productivity in Cross River State. This implies that, the more the use of collective bargaining

between workers and the management of the companies during conflict management, the better the companies workers' productivity in the state. The regression model also produced an R^2 of .087. This indicates that the collective bargaining accounted for 8.7% of the determinants of company workers productivity in the state. This finding is a critical indication that the collective bargaining has relatively fair influence on the company workers' productivity in the state. The F-ratio from the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) obtained from the regression table gives $F=42.26$ to 2 decimal places and the P-value of .000 (or $P < .05$) at the degree of freedom (df) 1 and 497. The implication of this result is that, the null hypothesis is rejected and the finding drawn from the result is that there is a significant influence of the collective bargaining strategy on the company workers' productivity in Cross River State. This implies that, the low level of the company workers' productivity in the state is accounted significantly for by poor collective bargaining in conflict management between companies' management and their workers.

Discussion

The findings of the study established that there was a significant influence of collective bargaining on the company workers' productivity in Cross River State. This means that, as far as union is concerned, collective bargaining de-emphasizes individualism but encourages collectivism between employers and their employees. The findings show that workers at all times will seek for what is commensurate to their input in their organizations in terms of labour and time while employers on their part will seek for the talent, skills and potentials of workers and in return reciprocate the workers' efforts monetarily to such extent that could not affect their profile margins.

The finding of the study was in agreement with Ekwuaba, Ideh and Ojikutu (2015) who conducted a study to investigate the use of collective bargaining as an instrument for management of conflict in educational institutions, using the Academic Staff

Union of Nigerian Universities and Non-Academic Staff Union, University of Lagos chapter. The study revealed that effective collective bargaining positively affects productivity, there exists an established procedure for conflict management in the universities and that collective bargaining is a veritable instrument for the management of conflict in the university. The finding of this research was supported by the study conducted by Akpan and Namuse (2016) on collective bargaining and its influence on workers' effectiveness in Nigerian public sector. The study revealed among others that effective collective bargaining breeds atmosphere of natural trust, confidence, cooperation and harmonious relationship among employers, management and workers, hence fostering increased workers' moral and commitment toward meeting performance targets of public organization.

The finding of the study was also in line with Anyim, Ikemuefuna, and Ogunyomi (2011) who noted that, in all industrial relation systems there are disagreements and disputes among various contending interests and collective bargaining democratic principles are required to resolve the disagreement and disputes as to have industrial harmony and peace. They maintain that collective bargaining is the process of resolving industrial conflicts in every industrial relations system. The source further emphasizes that collective bargaining is adopted to avoid industrial conflict via determination of working conditions and terms of employment between the employer(s) and workers' representatives. The source further concluded that collective bargaining plays the major role of resolving industrial conflicts by permitting decisions on salaries, hours of labour and working conditions to be made jointly between employee and employer's representatives through collective agreement.

Conclusion

The study's finding revealed that collective bargaining strategy of conflict management significantly influence company worker's productivity in Cross River State, Nigeria. Since conflict is

inevitable in work organizations, they must be appropriate management strategies to be adopted to ensure company workers' productivity in the state.

Recommendations

From the finding of this study, it was recommended that, conflict in whatever form should not be ignored but should be effectively managed collectively for better employee's productivity in the workplace.

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