

**ISSUES AND PROBLEMS OF INDUSTRIAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND
ADMINISTRATIVE EFFECTIVENESS IN GOVERNMENT-OWNED UNIVERSITIES
IN SOUTH WEST NIGERIA**

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Abstract

Industrial conflict is a frequent occurrence in Nigerian universities. This study examined issues and problems of industrial conflict management and administrative effectiveness in government-owned universities in Nigeria. The study was a descriptive survey of the correlation type. Purposive sampling technique was adopted to select 10 universities as sample from the 17 existing public universities in the south west region of the country. A researcher-designed questionnaire tagged "Questionnaire on Labour Disputes, Management Strategies and Administrative Effectiveness" (QLDMSAE) was used to collect data. The reliability test of the instrument was carried out and the Cronbach's Alpha was 0.71. Percentages and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Statistic were used for data. The findings revealed that inadequate staff welfare among others was the major cause of industrial conflict (57.2% highest participants); mediation was commonly employed by the management to resolve industrial conflict (77.7% participants). Significant relationship existed between participatory decision-making and administrative effectiveness ($r = 0.572, P < 0.05$) and between mediation and administrative effectiveness in Government-owned universities in Nigeria ($0.347, P < 0.05$). The study recommended that staff welfare should be given priority to prevent frequent occurrence of industrial conflict to ensure effective administration in Government-owned universities in Nigeria.

Keywords: Industrial conflict, Management Strategies, Administrative Effectiveness, Participatory Decision-Making and Mediation.

Introduction

Escalation of industrial conflict has been the Achilles' heel of Nigerian university system. It is any form of action or inaction that triggers hostility between the unions or employees and the management in the workplace, Nigerian government-owned universities in this context. Industrial strike often causes damages to the warring parties, the general public and all the stakeholders in the university system - the students, the parents, the institution and the government. Nigerian government-owned universities as reported by Fatile and Adejuwon (2011) have witnessed unprecedented number of industrial conflict in different forms since independence. This has made government-owned universities in Nigeria vulnerable to irregularities like industrial strike, absenteeism, lockout, sit-in, work-in, overtime ban and work-to-rule. The result of all these include interruption of the smooth running of academic calendar, brain drain of academia, victimization, sacked of Lecturers, wastage, blackmail and litigation. Interestingly, the agitations of the labour unions and the management styles adopted by the management of the government-owned universities have been constant with little or no improvement. This paper therefore seek to examine issues and problems of industrial conflict management and administrative effectiveness in government-owned universities in south west Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

This study purposely examined issues and problems of industrial conflict management and administrative effectiveness in government-owned universities in Nigeria as well as the major causes of industrial conflict in Government-owned universities in Nigeria; and the management strategies that are frequently engaged to solve industrial conflict in Government-owned universities in Nigeria.

Research Questions

This study provided answers to the following questions:

1. What are the major causes of industrial conflict in Government-owned universities in Nigeria?

2. What are the management approaches frequently engaged to solve industrial conflict in Government-owned universities in Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between participatory decision-making strategy and administrative effectiveness in Government-owned universities in Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between mediation strategy and administrative effectiveness in Government-owned universities in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Labour dispute has made public universities in Nigeria vulnerable to irregularities like industrial strike, absenteeism, lockout, sit-in, work-in, overtime ban and work-to-rule (Kannike, 2011). The result of all these include interruption of the smooth running of academic calendar, brain drain of academia, victimization, sack of lecturers, wastage, blackmail and litigation etc.

According to him certain factors that are responsible for the escalation of the sustained labour unrest in Nigerian universities revolve round policies affecting remuneration, allowances, conditions of service and fringe benefits. Interestingly, the management of these universities cannot claim ignorance of these. Scholars have exhumed certain factors that cause disharmony between labour unions and university management in Nigeria. For instance, Olujide, Akindele and Olorunleke (2006) noted that university management are accustomed to not paying attention to labour unions when they raise issues that bother their members, while Ron (2000) identified ineffective communication as one of the major causes of dispute in organizations. Fatile and Adejuwon (2011) mentioned that most disputes in Nigerian higher institutions are unique, involving academic freedom, research, policies, and personnel matters.

Several authors have identified causes of labour unrest in Nigerian Federal and State universities. Ndum and Okey (2013) identified factors that were responsible for industrial conflict in Nigerian universities as competition for scarce resources, goal

incompatibility, autonomy or academic freedom, management styles, difference in values and lifestyles, politics and national issues, role conflict such as work interdependence, and differences in performance criteria and reward systems; and behaviours like differences in background, values, personal traits, perceptions, communication, emotions, and attitudes.

Industrial conflict is usually triggered as a result of labour agitation for improvement in welfare, and continuous desire of unions and management to achieve their independent objectives (Dahida and Adekeye, 2013). Paul, Usman and Ali (2013) aligned in their opinions that government policies such as increment of fuel price, annulment of election and non-payment of minimum wage contribute to causes of industrial conflict in Nigeria.

Jackson, Richard and Gabriel (2006) lamented that the failure of university authorities to pay attention to unions' complaints often leads to industrial strike, absenteeism, lockout and demonstrations. Ekundayo (2012) stated that divergence expectations of management and labour unions also lead to an industrial strike.

Problems and Recent Occurrences of Industrial Conflict in Government-owned Universities in Nigeria

The industrial disputes between the labour unions and the management in Nigerian Federal and State universities came to the limelight recently. The different dimensions the agitations took are as follows:

1. Ekiti State University (EKSU). All the labour unions of Ekiti State University (EKSU), Ado-Ekiti, embarked on industrial action on Monday 5th December, 2016. They protested against non-payment of two months salaries, non-remittance of union dues, non-remittance of deductions from their salaries to the university cooperative societies, perceived fraudulent injection of over 600 new workers into different units in the institution, and the refusal of the university management to upgrade members of staff who had obtained additional qualifications for the past four years.

2. Federal University, Oye-Ekiti (FUOYE): FUOYE, established in 2011, has witnessed a number of labour unrests. Of recent, the ASUU, SSANU,

NASU and NAAT chapters of the university declared a 7-day warning strike (November 21st – 29th, 2016) after giving 21-day ultimatum and several meetings with the university management that ended in deadlock. The agitations of the unions include: The University's decision to adopt writing of aptitude test as the basis for promotion of staffers, imbalance of salaries of staffers in comparison with their counterparts in other Federal universities, and the refusal of the university management to pay allowances such as relocation, earned and other accumulated entitlements. The failure of the university management to accede to the agitations of the unions prompted the SSANU and NASU chapters of the institution to embark on indefinite strike that lasted for six weeks (9th January – 13th February, 2017). The non-academic staff unions also went on strike that lasted nine weeks (May 31st – July 17, 2017) because of the promotion related issues and the suspension of union leaders.

3. Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA), Ondo State: The NASU, SSANU and NAAT chapters of FUTA grounded all administrative and academic activities of the institution in protest on 6th October, 2016. The protest was motivated primarily on the implementation of the Federal Government policy on the ownership of the university's staff primary school. Prior to the protest, a circular came from the Federal Government which states that: *Staff schools are established as private enterprises and are to be funded by the institutions that established them* (Makinde, 2016). Thus, the university authority disengaged members of staff in the university's primary school so as to reapply to the same school under the management of the institution. Also, allegations on corruption were leveled against the university Vice-Chancellor (V.C.) and the Bursar. Consequently, the labour unions staged some protests and maintained that the university's V.C. should step aside.

4. Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile-Ife: The NASU, SSANU and NAAT chapters of OAU went haywire to protest against the appointment of the institution's new Vice-Chancellor (V.C.) on the allegation that the process involved in his election did not follow the due process; thus, they agitated for his removal. The protest started on 6th of June and lasted still September, 2016.

5. Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB), Ogun State.

The labour unions of FUNAAB protested against the sack of 23 of their members. According to Olatunji (2016), the management of FUNAAB relieved the affected staff of their jobs for writing a petition to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), accusing the university's Vice-Chancellor and the Pro-Chancellor of the Governing Council of corrupt practices. Meanwhile, the management of the university noted that the reasons for the sack of the workers were based on allegations of various gross misconducts such as dereliction, stealing, insubordination, sabotage and disruptions of peace in the university. However, the law court and elder statesmen prevailed against the decision of the university management. The sacked members of the staff were recalled on Thursday, 22nd December, 2016.

6. Proscribing of labour unionism by the management of some universities: As a result of incessant industrial conflict and irreconcilable differences between the management and union leaders, the management of Ladoké Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH), Ogbomosho, and Adekunle Ajasin University (AAU), Ondo State, had disbanded labour unionism prior to the time of carrying out this research. To forestall peace in LAUTECH, the State Governments of Oyo and Osun who are joint-owners of the University contributed a sum of #500, 000, 000.00 (~~₦~~250, 000, 000.00 each) to attend to some of the agitations of the labour unions.

7. Indefinite national industrial strike of ASUU: As at the time of carrying out this study, ASUU declared a nationwide strike in all the Federal and state universities. The strike commenced on Monday, August 14, 2017.

General Issues of Industrial Conflict across Nigeria Government-owned Universities

Industrial conflict is a nationwide phenomenon in Nigerian Federal and State universities. For instance, increment of petroleum price from ~~₦~~86.50k to ~~₦~~145 triggered all labour unions in Nigerian universities to go on industrial action (on May 18, 2016). Also, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the non-academic staff unions of Nigerian universities (NAAT, NASU AND SSANU) embarked on one-week nationwide warning strike on November 16 - 22, 2016 and January 16 -

20, 2017 to express their demands to the Federal Government. The reasons justified by the unions for the nationwide warning strike include but not limited to the non-implementation of the 2009 ASUU-Federal Government agreement, Payment of Federal universities' staff salaries in fractions since December, 2015 and the incomplete payment of their members' salaries. Agitation against the inclusion of Federal universities in the Treasury Single Account (TSA) policy. The policy mandates all Federal institutions to domicile their funds with the TSA in the CBN. ASUU kicked against the introduction of TSA because it was viewed to be incompatible with the running of universities and made access to funds difficult. Wrong handling of 2013 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The Federal Government and the leadership of ASUU signed a MoU in 2013 to end over five-month-old strike action. However, the Federal Government has failed to implement the agreement. Accumulated Earned Allowance, according to the Nigeria Tribune news September 2, 2016, the earned academic allowances owed by the Federal Government between 2013 and 2016 had accumulated to N124bn, besides prior accumulated arrears. The Federal Government has stopped to release the fund for revitalization of universities. Government's unilateral proscription of the post-Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (Post-UTME) test. ASUU believed that Federal Government has deprived government-owned universities of their autonomy and responsibility of determining the quality of students who enroll for admission.

Frustration of the registration of Nigerian University Pension Management Committee (NUPEMCO). The ASUU alleged that the refusal of the Federal Government to issue license for the registration of NUPEMCO was deliberate. Other reasons include non-payment of salaries of staff in the staff primary schools; non-release of subventions to state universities; inadequate funding of universities for revitalization; non-payment of staff entitlement since December, 2015 and demand for university autonomy. Failure of the Federal Government to address the agitations of ASUU, months after the one-week strike action, triggered an indefinite strike that commenced August 14, 2017 which has not been called off as at the time of carrying out this research.

Methodology

The design employed was basically descriptive survey of correlation type, the research technique is considered appropriate as it provides the opportunity to get the accurate record of a particular observation in order to avoid vague information of the analysis or inadequate description of a matter under observation. The findings form a basis upon which certain generalization about the population under study can be made.

The population for the study comprises all the 17 existing Public (State and Federal Government owned) Universities in South West Geographical Zones of Nigeria. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select the 10 universities used as sample for the study from the six states of the Geographical Zone. Respondents were selected from members of university management and labour union leaders (past and present) based on predefined inclusion criteria.

A questionnaire titled: "Questionnaire on Labour Disputes, Management Strategies and Administrative Effectiveness (QLDMSAE)" was constructed as research instruments for obtaining data from the respondents. The instruments were sectionalized into four Part A to D. Part A was designed to simply gather the demographic data of the respondents such as name of the university, type of the university, length of service, gender, qualification, status, and designation. Part B was designed to obtain different information about types, causes and impact of labour disputes in Nigerian public universities from the respondents. This part was subdivided into three sections. Part C was designed to obtain data on type and effectiveness of the labour disputes management strategies adopted by the university management to curtail the recurrence of labour disputes in Nigerian public universities. Part D was designed to gather data on administrative effectiveness of the management in the selected Federal and State universities. The drafts of the measuring instruments used in this study were given to educational experts for both face and content validities. Having constructively criticized and adjudged the drafts, the contributions were found invaluable to authenticate the measuring instruments the researcher used to gather information. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Statistics was used to calculate the coefficient at 0.05 significance level after the test-retest reliability method and an appropriate coefficient of 0.78, was obtained to

establish the reliability level of the instruments. The researcher used both descriptive and inferential statistics to analyse the data collected from the respondents. Frequency counts and descriptive statistics were employed to describe personal information of the respondents and answer research questions, respectively. The hypotheses were tested by using Inferential Statistics of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation to serve as the basis for acceptance or rejection at 0.05 level of significance. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 17.0 software was used for all the computations for data gathered on labour disputes, management strategies and administrative effectiveness in the public universities, South-West, Nigeria.

Answer to Research Question One

What are the major causes of industrial conflict in Government-owned universities in Nigeria? This research question was answered and presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Major Causes of Industrial Conflict in the Government-owned Universities

Items	SA		A		D		SD		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Salaries and emoluments related issues	364	53.8	229	33.9	75	11.1	8	1.2	3.40
Policies that threaten staff welfare	342	50.6	260	38.5	68	10.1	6	0.9	3.39
Amenities and infrastructural deficiencies	39	5.8	221	32.7	108	16.0	308	45.6	1.99
Poor working conditions	155	22.9	488	72.2	31	4.6	2	0.3	3.18
Staff training and development	52	7.7	498	73.7	109	16.1	17	2.5	2.87
Inadequate staff welfare	387	57.2	254	37.6	30	4.4	5	0.7	3.51
Allegations of corruption against the management	97	14.3	526	77.8	47	7.0	6	0.9	3.06
Communication	79	11.7	221	32.7	70	10.4	306	45.3	2.11

gap between the management and staff									
Deprivation of rights and privileges	364	53.8	215	31.8	72	10.7	25	3.7	3.36
Favouritism and nepotism	32	4.7	308	45.6	320	47.3	16	2.4	2.53
Inadequate funding	70	10.4	239	35.4	357	52.8	10	1.5	2.55
Failure of the government to fulfil signed agreements	118	17.5	416	61.5	110	16.3	32	4.7	2.92
Disciplinary matters	54	8.0	160	23.7	453	67.0	9	1.3	2.38
Average Total	166		310		142		58		2.87
Average Percentage		24.49		45.93		21.04		8.54	

Source: Field work (2016)

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentages of the major causes of industrial conflict in the sampled universities, based on the participants' impressions about the predominance. The table indicated that 387 (57.2%) participants strongly agreed that 'inadequate staff welfare' was the major cause of industrial conflict in government-owned universities in South-west, Nigeria. 'Salaries and emoluments related issues' and the 'deprivation of rights and privileges' were ranked 2nd with 364 (53.8%) participants. 'Policies that threaten staff welfare' and 'failure of the government to fulfill signed agreements' ranked 3rd and 4th with 342 (50.6%) and 118 (17.5%) participants respectively. The table also reveals that 'poor working conditions' ranked 5th among the participants with 155 (22.9%). This was followed in rank by the 'allegations of corruption against the management' [97 (14.3%)], 'communication gap between the management and staff' [79 (11.7%)], 'inadequate funding' [70 (10.4%)], 'disciplinary matters' [54 (8%)], 'staff training and development' [52 (7.7%)], 'amenities and infrastructural development' [39 (5.8%)] and 'favoritism and nepotism' [32 (4.7%)], which ranked the lowest among the thirteen major causes of industrial conflict in the government-owned universities in South-west, Nigeria.

This implies that 'inadequate staff welfare, Salaries and emoluments related issues, Deprivation of rights and privileges and Policies that threaten staff welfare' as revealed in table 1 above were the major causes of industrial conflict in government-owned universities in South-west, Nigeria.

Answer to Research Question Two

What are the management approaches frequently engaged to solve industrial conflict in Government-owned universities in Nigeria? This research question was answered and presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Management Approaches Frequently Engaged to Solve Industrial Conflict in the Government-owned Universities

Items	SA		A		D		SD		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Participatory Decision-making Strategy									
Management always involves staff in its decision-making process	65	9.6	223	33.0	376	55.6	12	1.8	2.50
Employees are carried along by the management whenever major policies affecting their jobs are being formulated	45	6.7	332	49.1	102	15.1	197	29.1	2.33
Employees are carried along by the management in its change process	56	8.3	472	69.8	128	18.91	20	3.0	2.83
Mediation Strategy									
Management always involves external intervention in conflicts before agreeing on terms of resolution	38	5.6	317	46.9	316	46.7	5	0.7	2.57
Management always involves a conciliator to meditate in any	46	6.8	308	45.6	308	45.6	14	2.1	2.57

conflict between it and the employees									
Management always involves industrial courts to intervene in dispute before resolving it	35	5.2	525	77.7	106	15.7	10	1.5	2.87
Management always resorts to arbitration panels to resolve dispute	38	5.6	482	71.3	143	21.2	13	1.9	2.81
Average Total	82		400		165		29		2.79
Average Percentage		12.13		59.15		24.39		4.32	

Source: Field work (2016)

Table 2 displays the frequencies and percentages of approaches that were frequently engaged by the university management to solve industrial conflict in the Government-owned universities in Nigeria and the participants' views.

The table shows that 'mediation strategy' was commonly employed by the management to resolve industrial conflicts with 525 or 77.7% participants. Specifically, the table indicated that 'Management always involves industrial courts to intervene in dispute before resolving it.' This was followed by 'participatory decision-making strategy' with 472 or 69.8% participants. The table reveals that 'employees are carried along by the management in its change process.

The findings revealed that most of the participants strongly agreed that 'mediation strategy' was commonly employed by the management to solve industrial conflicts in the government-owned universities in South-west, Nigeria.

Testing of Hypotheses

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation statistics was adopted to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between participatory decision-making strategy and administrative effectiveness in Government-owned universities in Nigeria.

Table 3 Participatory Decision-making Strategy and Administrative Effectiveness

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	Cal. r-value	P-value	Decision
Participatory decision-making	676	8.44	1.50	748	0.572	0.000	HO₁ Rejected
Administrative effectiveness	676	35.900	4.33				

Note: P<0.05 HO₁ Rejected

Table 3 presents that the P-value (0.000) was less than the significance level (at 0.05). Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, there was a significant relationship between participatory decision-making strategy and administrative effectiveness in the Government-owned universities in Nigeria.

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between mediation strategy and administrative effectiveness in Government-owned universities in Nigeria.

Table 4: Mediation Strategy and Administrative Effectiveness

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	Cal.r-value	P-value	Decision
Mediation strategy	676	11.60	1.42	674	0.347	0.000	HO₂ Rejected
Administrative effectiveness	676	35.900	4.33				

Note: P<0.05 HO₂ Rejected

Table 4 displays that the P-value (0.000) was less than the significant level (at 0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This showed there was a significant relationship between mediation

strategy and administrative effectiveness in the Government-owned universities in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The result on the major causes of industrial conflict in the Government-owned universities as shown on table 1 indicated that inadequate staff welfare was the predominant cause of industrial conflict in the sampled universities. In other words, if the university management had taken the staff welfare as a priority, several past industrial conflicts in Nigerian government-owned universities would have been averted. Staff welfare entails the provision of basic amenities such as regular power supply, internet or Information Communication Technology, and equipment of laboratories; payment of fringe benefits such as excess workload, hazards and earn allowances; increment of remuneration, and improvement of staff condition of service.

This finding supported the observation of Ekundayo (2012) and Nwankwo (2000) that poor funding, poor conditions of service, dilapidated structures and bad leadership style were the major causes of crises between labour unions and university management in Nigerian government-owned universities.

The hypothesis (H_{01}) presented on table 3 was rejected, which means participatory decision-making strategy had a positive relationship on administrative effectiveness of the Government-owned universities in Nigeria. This result implies that the involvement of labour union leaders in the decision-making process of the universities such as carrying them along in its change process, particularly whenever major policies affecting their jobs were being formulated, would curtail the reoccurrence of industrial conflict and enhance the effectiveness of the university administration. In essence, the labour union leaders will not be in the dark about the management decisions in the universities. Thus, misconceptions and costly assumptions that often lead to industrial conflict would be prevented.

Jackson, Richard and Gabriel (2006) agreed that the participation of union representatives and employees in decision-making and policy formulation in universities was the best approach to curtail industrial conflict and enhance universities administrative effectiveness. Alabi (2002) suggested unanimous sharing of internal and external resources by employees and the university management.

Finally, the result of the hypothesis (HO₂) shown on table 4 revealed that there was a significant relationship between mediation strategy and administrative effectiveness in the Government-owned universities in Nigeria. Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected because the P-value (0.000) was less than the significant level at 0.05, which means mediation strategy had positive relationship on administrative effectiveness in the government-owned universities. In essence, if the labour union leaders and the university management could abide by the resolution of a third party such as Industrial Arbitration Panel, National Industrial Court or Board of Enquiry, the escalation of industrial conflict could be curtailed and the effectiveness of the university administration could be guaranteed, as suggested by Akanbi (2001) and Kannike (2011), respectively. Therefore, Dahida and Adekeye (2013) recommended a flexible organizational structure in universities to improve the relationship between management and staff.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study it was concluded that inadequate staff welfare was the major cause of industrial conflict in the Government-owned universities. Management strategies determined the extent of the escalation of industrial conflict or otherwise, and which in turn could be used as parameter to judge the extent of effectiveness of the university administration.

The participatory decision-making strategy which involves labour union leaders could curtail the recurrence of industrial conflict and enhance administrative effectiveness in the Government owned universities. Finally, the use of mediation strategy which entails abiding by the resolution of a third party could curtail industrial conflict and enhance administrative effectiveness in the Government-owned universities.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings and conclusions drawn from this study, the following recommendations were made:

To prevent recurrence of industrial conflict, the university management should ensure that staff welfare is given a priority attention since inadequate staff welfare was discovered as the major cause of

industrial conflicts in the Nigerian government-owned universities. Also, university management should establish more programmes that can boost their Internal Generated Revenue (IGR) to attend to their staff welfare. Also, Federal and State Governments should increase the funds allocated to the university education to boost the morale of members of staff in the universities and facilitate enabling environment for teaching and learning, research and community development. Prevention of industrial conflict is a panacea for the effective administration of universities. To achieve the effective administration in the universities, therefore, members of staff and management should learn to peacefully iron out their differences and not to be allowed to degenerate into violence or closing down of universities at the detriment of the innocent students. Both the parties should jettison the idea of retaliation and embrace conventional means of settling their inevitable grievances.

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