

MANAGING INDUSTRIAL CONFLICT THROUGH EFFECTIVE NEGOTIATING SKILLS AMONG SELECTED UNION ORGANISATIONS IN LAGOS STATE

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Abstract

Negotiation is a common element in labour- management relations in industrial society. This is imperative in order to stem the waves of industrial disputes in the workplace. It is in view of this that the study examined managing industrial conflict through effective negotiating skills among selected union organizations in Lagos state. The specific objectives of the study were: to examine the perception of labour leaders and management representatives on the use of negotiating skills to manage industrial disputes, to examine the level of application of negotiating skills in labour-management relations and to verify the benefits and challenges of applying negotiating skills to manage workplace disputes. Research designs were both exploratory and survey. A two stage sampling technique consisting of purposive and simple random was used to select five union organizations and respondents. The sample size was 571 using Cochran sample size determination. In-depth interview and questionnaire were used to collect data. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and chi-square statistics at 0.05 level of significance, while qualitative data were content analysed. Majority of the respondents (92.5%) agreed that there should be the use of negotiating skills to manage workplace conflict, while 75% disagreed. While 3.6% of the respondents were rated high in the application of negotiating skills, 15.3% were rated moderate and 62.1% were rated low. It was also discovered that 54.5% of respondents believed that negotiating skills application would promote knowledge, skills and attitudes of union leaders, 26.4% claimed that it would develop their self- confidence and 30.2% agreed that it would enhance motivation and commitment to work. In respect of the challenges that may crop up in applying negotiating skills, 55.5% agreed that there would be challenges while 45.5% did not envisage any challenge.

Keywords: Industrial Conflict, Negotiating skills & Labour organisations

Introduction

Managing conflict entails exerting influence on the way a conflict is handled in order to prevent violence. It is a concerted effort made to prevent conflict from becoming volatile and destructive. A well- managed conflict will not only bring about the development of stable labour-management relations but also strengthen good relationship between labour and employer (Omole and Adegoke, 2011). In most cases,

economic interest always takes the centre stage of the conflict between labour and employer. Sometimes, it may be due to the failure to honour collective agreement on the part employer/management. It is believed that one of the instruments that can be used to suppress this frequent industrial unrest is the adoption of effective negotiating skills. Negotiating skills involve the ability to engage in problem- solving interaction in which two or more people voluntarily discuss their differences and attempt to reach a joint decision on their common goal (Venkata 2012). As long as it is a joint problem solving process, participants must understand negotiating influence, skills, principles, power play and processes which are based on qualities, training and experience of individuals.

As a matter of fact, conflict is inevitable between labour and employer in the work relations because their desires are inversely related in production process. While employer wants rise in output and profit with drastic reduction in the cost of production, workers want regular pay rise in their wages and salaries in order to enhance their living standard. This is the genesis of industrial disputes. Since conflict cannot be eradicated completely between labour and the management, it is sensible to manage it successfully in order not to turn into violence and destructive activity.

Statement of the Problem

The perennial industrial conflict in Nigerian work organizations is a serious concern to industrialists, employers of labour, government, academics and the larger society. This is even worrisome when we take cognizance of the fact that there are series of loss of earnings, loss of jobs, work stoppages, man hour's lost and low industrial output. With low industrial output, there won't be accelerated economic growth and development which will certainly affect national income and the living standard of Nigerians. From the foregoing, management of industrial conflict becomes inevitable for industrial harmony to reign supreme in Nigerian work organizations.

Past empirical studies on trade unions and conflict management had focused on issues relating to labour education (Omole, 1987); joint consultative committee (Olawale, 1990); UNESCO's culture of peace (Olagunju, 1997); multilateral bargaining (Abu, 1998); industrial democracy (Otobo,2000); gain-sharing (Fashoyin, 2001); peace-education

(Ajala, 2003); collective bargaining (Faniran, 2005); social dialogue (Onyeonoru, 2005 and 2006); trade unions reaction to globalization (Adenugba, 2006) and constant dialogue (Osaretin, 2009). As impressive as these works are, there is dearth of study on the effective use of negotiating skills to manage industrial conflict in industrial relations studies. It is this identified gap that the study hopes to fill through empirical investigation.

Evidence abounds to confirm the preponderance of labour unrest in Nigerian work relations specifically in Lagos state. For instance, in November 2001, Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) Lagos State branch went on strike and this affected the resumption of students in public schools. In September 2012, NUT Lagos State went on strike over the failure of Lagos State government to pay 27.5% Teachers' Salary Structure agreed on in 2008 (Molefe, 2012). In 2010, public workers in Lagos State Health sector went on strike between August and October. Between 2008 and 2012, Nurses and Midwives in Lagos State public hospitals went on strike three times: May 2008, September 2009, August-October 2010. Between 2008 and 2012, Medical Doctors in Lagos state public hospitals went on strike five times over consolidated salary structure: September 2009, March 2010, April 2011, Sept 2011, April – July 2012. In May 2012 Lagos State government sacked 788 striking Doctors (Olukemi, 2013).

In another development, National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) Lagos State branch in line with directives from headquarters went on strike in July 2008 over Nigerian bad roads, (Adebayo, 2013). In December 2010, they went on strike again in solidarity with Abuja NUPENG zone and in April and October 2010 they embarked on strike over Shell Petroleum Company's refusal to honour an agreement with NUPENG. In May 2012 NUPENG Lagos State branch threatened to go on solidarity strike over 788 sacked Doctors in Lagos state. (Kingsley, 2013). These unceasing labour crises can have serious socio- economic and psychological effects on Nigeria and the citizenry. Pertinent questions that must be addressed are: Do labour leaders and management representatives consider it essential to embrace negotiating skills in managing conflict? What is the level of application of negotiating skills in labour- management relations? What are the inherent benefits and problems associated with the use of negotiating skills?.

According to Onyeonoru (2015), the higher the number of disputes resulting in strikes, the lower the capacity to negotiate. The number of disputes resulting in strikes in Nigeria stood at one hundred and eighty seven in 1992, one hundred and fifty five in 1994, one hundred and thirty seven in 1993, one hundred and two in 2011 and four hundred and three in 2012. Most of these strikes centred on removal of fuel subsidy, agitation for democracy and agitation by trade unions for the payment of N18,000 minimum wage signed into law by the federal government. Onyeonoru (2015), went further to claim that the number of disputes resulting in strikes was a lot more in the military era (1989 – 1988) compared to the democratic era (1999 – 2015). Some recent public sector strikes include: the nation-wide strike by Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) embarked on July 1st 2013, which lasted till December 17, 2013. The dispute centered on non-implementation of 2009 collective agreement. Another one was the The Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) which commenced a nation-wide strike on July 1, 2014 due to failure of the federal government to address its grievances such as funding of health care sector and health infrastructural upgrade. Similarly, the Joint Health Sector Unions (JOHESU) and Nigeria Union of Allied Health Professionals (NUAIP) embarked on strike on October 16, 2014 and November 12, 2014 on non-implementation of 2009 collective agreement by the government. (Hassan, 2013).

From the foregoing, it is evident that urgent steps need to be taken in order to stem the intensity of industrial conflict especially through the effective use of negotiating skills. Negotiating skills will certainly facilitate robust exchange of ideas and consensus between labour and employers. It is in the light of this that the study examines the management of industrial conflict through effective use of negotiating skills.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of the study is managing industrial conflict through effective negotiating skills among selected trade unions in Lagos state.

The specific objectives are to:

- i. Examine the perception of union leaders and management representatives on the use of negotiating skills to manage disputes.

- ii. To examine the level of application of negotiating skills in labour-management relations.
- iii. To verify the benefits and the challenges of negotiating skills in managing disputes.

Literature Review

The literature reviewed in the study focused on industrial conflict and negotiating skills. According to Salamon (2015), industrial conflict includes any temporary suspension of working arrangement initiated unilaterally by employees (whether through the union or not) or management, with the aim of exerting pressure within the collective bargaining process. Similarly, Kornhauser, Dubin and Ross (2011) refer industrial conflict to the total range of behaviour and attitudes that express opposition and divergent orientations between owners and managers on one hand and working people and their organization on the other. Industrial conflict at the level of industrial relations refers to the conflict between workers represented by their trade unions and management representing the employers (Obisi, 2014).

Conflict is endemic in industrial society because the interests and aspiration of labour and management are not the same. While employees aim at getting better working conditions and improved welfare packages in order to promote their living standard, employers want to direct, control and co-ordinate labour in order to get maximum output from them and optimal profit from their businesses. These two contrasting goals more often than not create conflict between labour and employer. It has been argued that though industrial conflict is dangerous and devastating to work relation, it is still needed due to its relevance in industrial society because apart from being a direct challenge to the internal order and stability of the social system, it helps to balance different interests within a dynamic and constantly developing social system.

Types of Industrial Conflict

What readily comes to the mind of many people when discussing industrial conflict is the concept of strike. However, industrial conflict goes beyond strike; it can manifest in various forms. Oribabor (2010) and Fajana (2006), claimed that industrial protest maybe individually

or collectively expressed or executed. Amongst the identified individually expressed conflicts are:

- (i) *Absenteeism*: This is when a worker decides not to report to work without giving prior notice.
- (ii) *Sabotage*: This takes place when workers work at cross-purposes with the objectives of the organization. This may extend to deliberate damage of the organisation's property or equipment
- (iii) *High Labour Turnover*: This centres on the rate people come into an organization and leave.
- (iv) *Pilfering*: This is how the people in an organization steal equipment and products of an organization.
- (v) *Output restriction*: This is when workers deliberately reduce the number of daily production in order to express their grievances.
- (vi) *Fraud*: This is when a worker or group of workers connive to defraud their organisations by stealing money.
- (vii) *Exit*: This is the ultimate expression of individual conflict. An oppressed employee will quit because of the contradictions of the work place's experiences with his own principles.

Collectively organised form of conflict requires proper planning and strategy since unions are involved. Such conflict may be in form of:

- (i) *Demonstration/picketing*: This is the outcome of mass meeting the union and workers have been having. In this regard, it involves publicising the existence of the trade dispute by patrolling near the location where the dispute is taking place.
- (ii) *Work-to-rule/slow down*: This is when workers work at such a pace to ensure minimum efficiency and normal profit. The work is slow to cause reduction in output by workers in an effort to win concessions from employer.
- (iii) *Overtime Ban*: This is a deliberate attempt to reduce the output and profits of the employer by the workers. According to Fajana (2006), by not doing overtime, the employees lose in terms of take home pay but they gain in terms of more work available.

- (iv) *Sit-in*: This is when workers take over the work of the enterprise after overpowering the management and apprehending the business assets.
- (v) *Work-in*: This is when employees prevent the employer from closing the factory and stopping him from realising the full value of the property, while the property continues to be used for manufacturing in the workers' interest (Yesufu, 2001).
- (vi) *Strike*: This is a temporary cessation of work efforts by employees in the pursuance of a grievance or demand.

Both Otobo (2010) ,Fajana (2013) and Yusuf (2008), argued that the sources of industrial conflict may be classified into: (a) internal (b) external. The internal sources identified by Otobo include: style of management, nature of physical environment of the workplace, training or social consciousness of workers, conditions of service, efficiency or otherwise of the promotion system and cumbersomeness of grievance and disputes procedure. The external sources of industrial conflict according to Otobo are: government's industrial and economic policies, nature of labour law, unethical behaviour of the political class, national economic mismanagement, general distribution of wealth and power in the society and the nature of the capitalist economy. Although some of these factors may not be potential sources of conflict, they determine the general expectations and demands of labour in the workplace that may lead to industrial unrest.

Okafor and Bode- Okunade (2005), remarked that if a country experiences persistent labour disputes in form of strike, the impact will be on workers/unions, employers (organizations) and the nation at large. The effects on the workers/unions are: loss of earnings, loss of jobs by union leaders, injuries or loss of lives, arrest, and detention of union leaders. Effects on employers (organisations) can be in the following ways: loss of expected revenue for the organization, wastage of assets, vandalism of company'assets and dented image of the organization. Finally, the effects of industrial conflict on the nation include: binging of the economy to a halt, loss of lives during demonstration or protests, lack of regular supply of light and water and movement of vehicles will be disturbed.

Considering these negative effects, it is therefore imperative for parties in industrial relations to always make concerted efforts to manage

conflicts effectively by using the right skills so that conflicts won't degenerate into devastating level.

Effective Negotiating skills as platform for managing Industrial conflict

Salamon (2000) defines negotiation as a process of dialogue between people in order to resolve their differences and reach an agreement. Onasanya (2015) refers negotiation to the process of bargaining between the employer or employer's organization and the worker's representatives or workers' organization. Negotiating skills refer to the ability to engage in a problem-solving interaction in which two or more people voluntarily discuss their differences and attempt to reach a joint decision on their common goal. It extends to ability to converse with a view to finding terms of agreement. This presupposes that in negotiation, there is a battle of wit to be displayed by both parties in order to gain upper hand or attain win-win agreement. Armstrong (2014), remarked that negotiation is sometimes considered as a game because both sides are trying to win by following various rules which may sometimes be violated in the heat of the battle. It must be emphasised that collective bargaining is just a process of negotiation; it is within negotiation process that bargaining takes place.

In industrial relations, there must be constant interaction and mutual agreement between labour and management through negotiation process. By so doing, protracted issues relating to terms and conditions of employment can be tabled, reviewed and discussed for the benefits of all parties in industrial relations. Appropriate use of negotiating skills in the work relations between representatives of labour and that of management promotes enduring and healthy labour-management relations.

Parties involved in negotiation must always sharpen their skills in order to make collective bargaining relevant, fruitful and meaningful. According to Salamon (2005), negotiating skills must be made explicit between representatives of labour and management since the end result is to reconcile differences between the parties involved. In a bid to achieve a mutually acceptable compromise, the parties involved in negotiation must be ready to modify their demands. As a conflict management instrument among the interacting parties, the outcome of negotiations sometimes depends on the perceived relative powers among the participants.

Onyeonoru (2005), affirmed that negotiation is an integral part or component of collective bargaining in organization typically between employers and workers. To make collective bargaining effective, negotiation is essential as machinery for institutionalization of conflict in organization labour and management. In the process of negotiation, Richard and Robert (200) identified two models of bargaining relationship. The first type is distributive bargaining which is a negotiating situation in which one party can only gain at the expense of other party. The second is integrative bargaining which is when both union and management identify common problems perhaps due to adverse economic conditions then reach agreement on certain issues. Chamberlin and Kuhn (2009) equally differentiated between conjunctive and cooperative bargaining. Conjunctive bargaining takes place when an agreement is reached in view of the fact that the operations on which both parties are dependent may continue and its basic ingredient is coercion. Co-operative bargaining refers to when each party depends on the other and can objectively achieve its goals if the support of the other party is won.

Advantages of negotiating skills in promoting harmonious labour-management relations

Negotiating skills is relevant when new employees are hired by the employer because they will be able to know their responsibilities. This will enable the employees to know what are expected of them from the employer.

- (a) It helps to create win-win situations where everyone involved in negotiation will have the impression that the deal is a good one. It promotes aggressively the goodwill of both labour and management in order to get what they want.
- (b) It helps the labour and management to get the best possible deal as a way of improving their bottom line. If for example, the cost of production is reduced, the percentage reduction can be added to the profit of the organization.
- (c) Negotiating skills increase the confidence of both labour and management in order to have a better deal. The skills increase their basic knowledge in order to remain focus on issues to negotiate on, to present issues confidently and provide offers and counter- offers that can bring good result.

- (d) Negotiating skills help to build respect because the impression created by an employer after negotiation goes a long way to earn the respect or otherwise of union representatives which will certainly affect future negotiations. That is why it is pertinent for an employer to create the impression of a fearless character at the negotiating table instead of an ordinary pushover. Ability to negotiate very well will encourage people to work with such an employer.

Problems of negotiating skills in labour- management relations

- (a) Failure to honour agreement by one of the parties to agreement during negotiation is a serious problem. For instance, agreement reached by ASSUU and federal government of Nigeria in 1999 is yet to be fully honoured by the latter till this moment and this has reinforced ASSUU strike in Nigeria.
- (b) Selfishness on the part of any member of the party to negotiation. Negotiation becomes a problem when a party believes that its interest alone must be pursued and satisfied without recourse to the problems of the other party. This is where winner takes all syndrome crops up. At the end, instead of addressing the conflict at stake, problems will keep on escalating.
- (c) Inability to get prepared for the negotiation on the part of the parties involved is another challenge. This may be attributed to lack of time and patience to prepare very well or lack of confidence as a result of low education to communicate effectively at negotiation table. The overall consequence of this is the use of derogatory remarks during negotiation or demonstration of aggressive and rigid posture during negotiation.

Theoretical Framework

The Structural Analysis theory of Negotiation: This theory centres on distribution of empowering elements among two negotiating parties. Structural theory moves away from traditional realist notions of power in negotiation but also focuses on power as a relation between union

and management in negotiation process. According to Drukhan (2013), in structural analysis it is believed that there may be either power-symmetry between equally strong parties or power-asymmetry between a stronger and a weaker party. All elements from which the respective parties can draw power constitute structure. They may be of material nature, e.g., hard power, (such as weapons) or of social nature, i.e. soft power, (such as norms, contracts or precedents). These instrumental elements of power, are either defined as parties' relative position (resources position) or as their relative ability to make their options prevail.

Structural analysis is often criticized because it predicts that the strongest will always win in negotiation which may not always be true. Winning in negotiation may depend on other factors such as management positive attitude, economic buoyancy of the affected organization, ability to honour agreement by both parties, history of the organization and the existing relationship between union and management.

Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research design was both survey and exploratory by combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques. This stems from the need to make the research utilise the benefits of both techniques so that the weaknesses of one can be compensated by the strengths of the other.

Five trade unions from different sectors of Nigerian economy in Lagos State were purposively selected for this research work namely: Medical and Health Workers Union (Health sector), National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (Petroleum sector), National Union of Banks, Insurance and Financial Institution Employees (Banking sector), National Union of Foods, Beverages and Tobacco Employees (Manufacturing sector) and Nigerian Employers Consultative Association (Employers Association).

The population for this research was the elected and appointed labour union leaders, management representatives, ex-officio of the unions, highly experienced, influential and knowledgeable union members, labour officers from ministry of labour and productivity and management

representatives (members of Nigerian Employers' Consultative Association) in Lagos State, Nigeria.

The sample size was 571 by using Cochran sample size determination and multi-stage sampling technique was adopted.. The two methods of data collection used were Quantitative method and Qualitative method. The research instrument to collect quantitative data was questionnaire while in-depth interview was used to collect qualitative data. The reason for this was to ensure that the data from in-depth interview would further enrich data from other categories of respondents through the questionnaire.

Quantitative data collected through the questionnaire were analysed by using descriptive statistical tools such as frequency, percentages, pie chart and multiple bar chart. Bivariate analyses were used to show relationship among variables which involved the use of chi-square test at 0.05 level of significance. Data collected from secondary sources on number, objectives and types of training were equally analysed qualitatively. Qualitative data from in-depth interviews were equally transcribed and analysed using content analysis.

Discussion of findings

4.2.1. Perception of Labour Leaders on the use of Negotiating Skills in managing Disputes

Questions/Statements	UNION ORGANIZATIONS					Statistics
	NUPENG	NUBIFE	NUFBTE	M &HWU	TOTAL	
	N = 140	N = 130	N = 120	N = 130	N = 520	
	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %	
Whether there should be the use of negotiating skills to manage conflict						
Yes	120 (85.1)	120 (93.3)	115 (95.8)	124 (95.3)	479 (92.5)	$\chi^2 = 15.78$; Df=3 p value= 0.001
No	20 (14.3)	5 (4.2)	5 (4.2)	6 (4.7)	41 (7.5)	
Relevance of negotiating skills						

To know difference between expected and actual performance	5 (3.5)	4 (3.0)	10 (8.3)	7 (5.3)	26 (5.0)	χ^2 =14.48; Df=9 p value= 0.002
To improve skills and knowledge	10 (7.1)	13 (10.1)	10 (16.8)	12 (92.3)	55 (10.5)	
To develop conflict management skills properly	80 (57.1)	83 (63.8)	70 (58.1)	95 (73.0)	328 (63.2)	
To reduce workplace conflict	45 (32.1)	30 (23.1)	20 (17.0)	16 (12.3)	111 (21.3)	
Negotiating skills should centre mostly on						χ^2 =14.77; Df=15 p value=0 .005
Human relations skills	19 (13.2)	10 (8.1)	14 (12.2)	5 (4.0)	48 (9.0)	
Empathy skills	15 (11.3)	20 (15.0)	3 (3.0)	12 (9.2)	50 (9.6)	
Communication skills	7 (5.0)	19 (14.9)	2 (2.3)	10 (8.4)	38 (7.1)	
Emotional intelligence skills	20 (13.3)	16 (12.0)	20 (20.1)	30 (23.4)	86 (16.0)	
The four conflict management skills	79 (56.2)	65 (50.1)	81 (50.4)	73 (56.0)	298 (57.3)	
Implementation of negotiating skills can produce desirable result						χ^2 =1.74 ;Df=6 p value= 0.42
By making it regular	12 (8.5)	18 (15.1)	24 (43.1)	11 (8.4)	65 (14.6)	
By making it produce adaptation to new situation by union leaders	50 (36.1)	51 (43.2)	51 (43.2)	48 (36.9)	200 (38.1)	
By making it improve knowledge skills and attitudes	78 (57.7)	35 (29.3)	71 (55.8)	71 (54.6)	255 (47.3)	
How can the need for negotiating skills be regularly identified						χ^2 =15.78; Df=6 p value=
By conducting analysis of individual union performance level	27 (19.1)	18 (14.3)	5 (4.0)	10 (8.1)	60 (11.5)	

Through directives from top union leaders	31 (36.2)	36 (38.4)	41 (37.3)	41 (37.3)	158 (30.3)	0.0001
Through analysis of complaints and grievances by union leaders	82 (59.0)	76 (58.1)	97 (60.2)	97 (60.2)	302 (58.2)	

Source: Author's Survey

From the table 4.1.1 above, as to whether there should be the use of negotiating skills in conflict management 92.5% of the respondents agreed by saying 'Yes', while 7.5% of the respondents said 'No. The test of relationship between the two variables indicated that significant relationship existed between the use of negotiating skills and conflict management ($X^2=15.78$; p value =0.001).

In respect of the relevance of the use of negotiating skills, 63.2% of the respondents believed that it would develop skills properly in conflict management skills, with the highest proportion (73%) of this category from Medical and Health Workers Union. In addition, 10.5% of the respondents believed that it would improve, knowledge, skills and attitudes of the union leaders and 5.0% believed that it would assist in bridging the gap between actual performance and expected performance among union leaders while 21.3% claimed that it would reduce workplace conflict.

On the issue of their perception on the training in the use of negotiating skills, one of the Chairmen of the unions said:

Negotiating skills are basically behavioural changing skills in work relations. Their effective use in conflict management will usher in positive changes in the conflict handling behaviour of parties responsible for managing conflict. It will equally reduce the incidence of strikes in Nigeria. However, it is unfortunate that efforts to bring union leaders together to make such use mandatory has not produced desirable results in Nigeria (**IDI/Male/ Chairman/NUBIFIE/ 2013**).

Probing further on the issue of the relevance of negotiating skills in conflict management, another Chairman of one of the unions said:

The use of negotiating skills in conflict management will positively influence the approach used by labour leaders and management representatives to handle conflict. This will certainly reduce the rate at which trade disputes are declared by labour leaders. The overall consequence is that persistent strike will become a thing of the past in Nigeria and this will pave way for industrial harmony, organizational development and profit making by the employers **(IDI//Male/Chairman – NUFBITE/ 2013).**

On the issue of their attitudes towards the use of negotiating skills in conflict management, one Deputy Chairman of the union said:

Honestly speaking, there ought to be regular use and training in negotiating skills and many more in order to have complete change in our attitudes towards management of conflict. An average union leader in Nigeria believes that unless radical approach is used to confront employer no meaningful result can be achieved. It is not the fault of labour leaders but that of employer who are too reluctant to dance to the tunes of labour unless you fight them. With training and persistent use of negotiating skills, I'm sure there would be culture of patience, maturity and mutual understanding in resolving issues. Let me add that the use must be collective. That is, it must be extended to management representatives too because they always look down on us as if we are not educated like them and they take that undue advantage to exploit us in most cases **(IDI/Male/Deputy Chairman M &HWU/ 2013).**

Level of Application of the Negotiating skills Conflict Management in Labour-Management Relations

	NUPENG	NUBIFIE	NUFBTE	M & HWU	TOTAL
APPLICATION LEVEL	N = 140	N = 130	N = 120	N = 130	N = 520
	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %
NEGOTIATING SKILLS					
Low	107 (76.4)	92 (71.2)	115 (96.4)	99 (76.2)	323 (62.1)
Moderate	26 (19.2)	32 (25.2)	3 (2.5)	27 (21.2)	88 (15.3)
High	7 (5.1)	6 (5.0)	2 (1.6)	4 (3.1)	19 (3.6)
χ^2	$\chi^2 = 0.72$; p value= 0.70; Df=6				

Source: Author's Survey

On the level of application of negotiating skill among labour leaders in labour-management relations in the selected union organizations, 62.1% of the respondents were in the low category while 15.1% of the respondent were in the moderate category, 3.1% of the respondents were high in applying negotiating skill. This analysis is shown in the pie chart below.

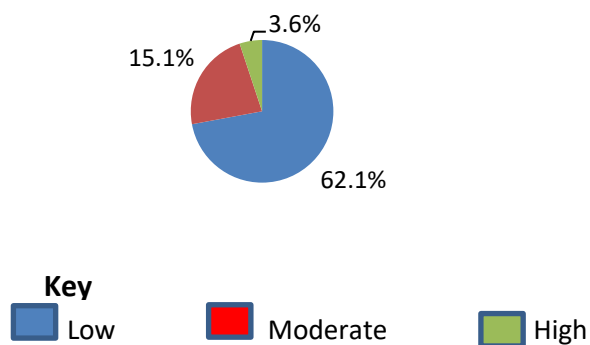


Fig. 18: Pie chart showing the level of application of negotiating skill

Across the four union organizations, the lowest percentages fell within the high category with highest proportion from NUPENG (5.1%), while the highest percentages were within the low category with highest proportion from NUFBT (96.4%) and the lower percentages were within the moderate category with highest proportion from NUBIFIE (25.2%). There was no significant relationship between negotiating skill and labour-management relation ($X^2=0.72$; $p\text{value}=0.70$)

From the above, there is urgent need for labour leaders to undergo training courses in negotiating skill. The reason why majority of them are low in the application of negotiating skill may be due to their low level of education. This is seriously affecting their negotiating ability and power to communicate meaningfully and effectively which is contrary to what was available among the management representatives. In view of this, such training must be on regular basis and must be well implemented and evaluated for genuine negotiation to take place between labour and management.

**Distribution of Respondents' opinion on the Benefits of Applying
Negotiating Skills**

Statements	UNION ORGANIZATIONS				
	NUPENG	NUBIFIE	NUFBTE	M & HWU	TOTAL
	N = 140	N = 130	N = 120	N = 130	N = 520
	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %
Whether there is any benefit envisaged in the use of negotiating skills in conflict management					
Yes	140	130	120	130	520
No	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)
	—	—	—	—	—
	—	—	—	—	—
The benefit may be in form of					
Equipping union leaders' knowledge, skills and attitudes	80 (57.3)	20 (15.1)	60 (50.0)	70 (54.2)	230 (54.4)
Developing sell confidence among union leaders	20 (14.2)	25 (20.0)	40 (33.3)	50 (38.3)	135 (26.4)

Enhancing motivation and commitment to work	40 (29.4)	85 (65.4)	20 (17.2)	10 (8.1)	155 (30.2)
X ²	X ² = 76.48; p value= 0.001;Df=6				
At organizational level using negotiating skills will lead to					
shared values	40 (29.1)	38 (28.1)	42 (35.3)	35 (27.3)	155 (30.2)
Reduction in organizational conflict	58 (41.2)	62 (48.3)	70 (58.4)	66 (51.1)	256 (49.2)
Improvement in union organization performance	42 (30.2)	30 (24.5)	8 (27.3)	29 (22.4)	109 (20.6)
X ²	X ² = 11.49; p value= 0.003;Df=6				
At professional/ occupational level, the use of negotiating skills will lead to					
Proficient management of union management conflict	33 (24.3)	50 (38.2)	36 (30.2)	27 (21.4)	146 (28.6)
New methods to manage conflict	40 (28.6)	36 (24.4)	39 (33.5)	62 (48.2)	177 (34.3)
Professional skills, knowledge and attitudes of labour leaders	67 (48.1)	44 (34.3)	45 (34.5)	41 (31.3)	197 (38.1)
X ²	X ² = 6.93;pvalue= 0.03;Df=6				

Source; Author's Survey

From the table above, all the respondents (100%) indicated that the use of negotiating skills in conflict management would be of benefit to union leaders. This affirmative view was supported by the entire management representatives likewise the labour officers. One of the management representatives said:

You cannot compare knowledge acquisition through regular use of negotiating skills with anything. I am confident that with regular use of the negotiating skills, recurrent labour disputes

would become a thing of the past(**IDI/Male/NECA/ 2013**).

As to how such use would be of benefit, 54.4% of the respondents claimed that it would equip labour leaders with knowledge, skills and attitudes. Similarly, 26.4% of the respondents were of the opinion that such training would develop self confidence among union leaders while 30.2% of the respondents believed that such regular use would promote commitment and motivation among union leaders.

In respect of the benefits of the negotiating skills at organizational level, 30.2% of the respondents were of the opinion that it would promote shared values while 49.2% of the respondents believed that it would reduce organizational conflict. Similarly, the view was supported by one of the labour officers that:

Persistent use would reduce drastically union organizations having conflict with employers of labour frequently thereby enhancing individual and organizational development. That is why we need such negotiating skills in Nigeria regularly especially among the major actors in industrial relations (**IDI/ Female/Labour officer/ 2013**).

Finally, 20.6% of the respondents were of the opinion that such regular use would lead to improvement in union organisations' performance.

At the occupational/professional level of union leaders, the use of negotiating skills according to 28.6% of the respondents would bring proficiency in handling union-management disputes. In addition, 34.3% of the respondents believed that the training would facilitate new methods to manage disputes while 38.1% of the respondents claimed that it would improve professional skills, attitudes and knowledge of labour leaders. This last view was supported by all the four chairmen of the unions that with regular and effective implementation of negotiating skills, there would be radical change in the approach, methods, skills, knowledge and attitudes of union leaders in their conflict handling behaviour.

In respect of the likely problem that may emerge due to the application of negotiating skills to manage industrial disputes, the above table reveals that 55.1% of the respondents were of the opinion that there would be serious challenges, while 43.3% of the respondents claimed

that no problem would emerge. Expectedly, when new change is introduced in any organization, people might initially find it difficult to adjust. However, this is quite contrary to the opinions of the majority of management representatives who believed that there won't be much problem. According to one management representative:

I don't foresee much problem in applying effective negotiating skills to manage conflict except the area of attitudinal change of our people. It will facilitate robust interaction between labour and management. However, most labour leaders are impatient, they are always confrontational in their demands from the management **(IDI/ Female/NECA/ 2013)**.

Concerning the challenges that may likely emerge on the application of negotiating skills in conflict management, another labour officer said:

By virtue of my position as a labour officer, effective use of negotiating skills in labour- management relations remains paramount. This will enhance mutual understanding good rapport between unions and management. Above all, there must be regular training in the use of these skills.**(IDI/ Male/Labour Officer/ 2013)**.

Probing further on the likely challenges that may crop up in such training a Chairman of one of the unions said further:

The problem I envisage is the attitude of most of our members towards effective use of the negotiating skills since most of them have not received proper education on it which is unbecoming. Only few are ready to learn new thing and that is why labour education is low in Nigeria**(IDI/Male/Chairman – NUPENG/ 2013)**.

As regards how effective use of negotiating skills can pose challenge, 34.3% of the respondents attributed it to negative attitude of people towards negotiating skills due to low education among labour leaders, while 10.2% of the respondents believed that the need for it may not be properly understood. The largest proportion 48.5% of the respondents attributed the likely problem to inadequate financial resources to receive

proper training in the use of the skills before they can be well implemented

Conclusion

The findings revealed that majority of management representatives and labour leaders agreed with the effective use of negotiating skills in managing industrial disputes. Both parties were low in the application of negotiating skills in labour- management relations. This may be one of the reasons why industrial conflict remains persistent in many work organisations. One of the basic reasons for this is low level of education among most of the labour leaders which often paves way for their confrontational approach to conflict resolution. Consequently, union leaders, must embrace new orientation and approach that can engender peace in their conflict handling behaviour. This can be achieved through effective application of negotiating skills. It can, therefore, be concluded that the use of negotiating skills is not regular and effective which is one of the reasons for unceasing labour unrest in many work organizations.

Recommendations

From the above analyses, it is hereby recommended that apart from making negotiation a must or common practice between labour and management in Nigerian work organizations, there should be establishment of many training institutions by the government for union leaders and management in negotiating skills. At the beginning of each year, all labour unions must make it mandatory for all their leaders to attend such training. The same method should be applied to management representatives in order to reduce the incidence of labour unrest in the country. Besides, it will promote harmony, co-operation and unity that are needed for peaceful co-existence among the stakeholders in the workplace.

Finally, the fact that union leaders and management representatives are low in the application of negotiating skills implies that all the union organisations in private and public sectors must integrate effective negotiating skills in their vision and mission statements. This will serve as a guideline to follow in labour – management relations on regular basis, thereby promoting mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence among the actors in industrial relations.

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