

Joint Consultation as Correlate of Employee Commitment in Nigeria

John Mark ¹

Abstract

The study adopted discourse content analysis using secondary information of existing literature on the subject matter to draw up a concrete conclusion with the aid of graphic discussion. The study concluded that there is a close connection between joint consultation and employee commitment. The study adopted descriptive research design and a target population of 420. Stratified random sampling was done. Questionnaires were used to collect primary data. Qualitative and quantitative techniques of data analysis were employed. Based on the study findings, joint consultation can enhance employee trust, commitment and labor efficiency. The paper then recommends that Company-Act on joint-consultation should be introduced in industrial policies as this is capable of enhancing Employee-commitment.

Keywords: *Joint Consultation, Employee Commitment.*

¹Faculty of Management Sciences, Department of Management, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Introduction

Joint consultation is a formal system of communication between the management of an organization and the employees' representatives used prior to taking decisions affecting the workforce, usually carried out by a joint consultative committee (Neuman, 2000). According to Armstrong (Majaye, 2015), 'joint consultation enables managers and employee representatives to meet on a regular basis in order to exchange views and utilize member's knowledge and expertise in dealing with matters of common interests that are not the subject of collective bargaining. Neuman (2000) reports that for joint consultation to work well, it is necessary to first define, discuss and agree on its objectives. These objectives should be related to tangible and significant aspects of the job, the process of management, or the formulation of policies that affect the interests of employees. The consultation should take place before decisions are made. Management must believe in employees and involve them in decision making. The unions must also believe in participation as a genuine means of giving them voice and advancing the interest of their members, instead of using it as a way of getting more power.

It is believed (Pyman & Teicher, 2010) that employers introduce joint consultation for the following reasons: to enhance efficiency by increasing the stock of ideas; which are available within the organization because of the wider exposure of an issue or problem; to reduce industrial action as it provides an opportunity for employees to express their view; it leads to increased employee satisfaction due to the greater level of commitment that joint consultative committee brings. Researchers (Pyman & Teicher, 2010; Okon & Patrick, 2012) have highlighted the usefulness of joint consultation in organizations. Ukoni (2006) reported that joint consultation was highly favored by companies at different stages in their progress towards a partnership arrangement with employee representative in the area of policy making and strategic matters.

Joint Consultation

Scholarly reports have it that Joint Consultative Committee is focused towards joint decision making on selected operational and strategic issues. It provides employees with bargaining power. Workers and unions actively engage in decision making, but only to a limited extent. Ukoni (2006) is of the view that joint consultative committee may be successful in most organization because employers have shown their commitment to the unions and employee relations. Also, in an environment characterized by hyper competition and change, there is need for management and employees' representatives to work together, rather than to work against each other.

Onah (2008) believes that joint consultation can have a positive effect on employee attitudes, reassuring employees that their interests are not being ignored when key decisions are taken. Joint consultation can enhance employee trust in management and in the credibility of management messages. It can also show respect and reinforce a belief in management's intention to behave fairly. It then follows that joint consultation is primarily concerned with 'information sharing' and not "influence sharing". Okon and Asu (2012) claim that participants in their study see it as a method of communication, by which information can flow both to and from the bottom and top levels of the organization. This communication can and is used for propaganda purposes, such as canvassing support for management decisions or attempting to reduce the scope and influence of the unions. Joint consultation was also used by management to test employees' feelings on issues and as an early warning system for major grievances. There is a

consistent assumption that the manager gains from the opportunity to hear the employee's comments on decisions and that change is more likely to be accepted if employees are, in some way, involved. Bates and Murphy noted that joint consultation continued to survive in the study organizations partly because of the lack of consensus as to its function by organization members and partly as the result of what amounted to a conspiracy of vested interests.

They concluded by asserting that joint consultation was a deterrent to employee's participation in organizations and hence does not promote employee voice. Pyman et al., (2008) research on joint consultation in Australia revealed that there was a form of employee voice. Employees believe that joint consultation does not represent their views and is being monopolized by management. With these diverse views regarding the use of joint consultation, this work examined workers commitment and its relationship with joint consultation as highlighted by other researchers. It is the author's contention that when employees are given voice with the use of joint consultation their commitment to the organization will increase.

Absence of Incidence Strike

To the industrial strikers, strike speaks to the activity of his major right to pull back his administration. Circumstances which seem to negate his own desire and yearning or which debilitates the satisfaction of the requirements of the individual are being enrolled during the time spent in striking. All the more vitally, it is these individual rights that propel the union to set out on strike activity. The union quality in an industry, in this manner generally depends on the force of the strike. The strike is an extremely strong apparatus and can be intense if the workers on strike speak with one voice or if the attendant loss brought about by the strike is exceptionally huge. The strike likewise makes the administration to unite genuinely in future transactions; in that capacity, effective strikes improve the dealing position of the union for next arrangement.

The strike if effective enhances the financial prosperity of the individuals from exchange union as they can pay increments as a consequence of strike activity. Striking workers additionally stand the larger chance of losing considerable wage amid the time of the strike. On account of this, the Nigerian government may frequently invoke the no-work-no-pay law. The Nigerian Government has reliably constrained the privilege to assault in the oil business. A portion of the applicable enactment could be located in the Trade Disagreement Acts of 1976, and 1999. The Trade Unions (Amendment) Decree of 1996 made trade union registration contingent on a "no strike" proviso all through the lifetime of an organization. Without any doubt, it unmistakably says that business organizations should not allow workers to form trade unions unless the workers give consent or agree not to use the unions to embark on incessant strikes. As opposed to International Labour Organization (ILO) statutes, strikes in the crucial sectors, including the oil and gas industry, are completely prohibited in Nigeria. Section 9 of the Trade Dispute (Essential Services) Act, 1976, which records the financial parts which fall inside "key management", incorporates the oil business. Subsection (b) alludes to "any administration built up, gave or kept up by the Government of the Federation or of a State, by a Local Government Councilor in any metropolitan or statutory power, or by private venture for, or regarding, the supply of power, or water, or of fuel of any sort". The Preface of the Act additionally express that the Act is to "enable the President to restrict any trade union or which plans to embark on strike or engage in any act or acts capable of destabilizing the smooth running of government. The Government of Nigeria likewise proclaims any industrial action embarked by its unions as unlawful, most times accusing them of being politically- motivated. For instance, a strike at Shell-BP and Allied Workers Union in October 1977 and a strike at the Pan Ocean Branch of the

consolidated Petroleum, Chemical and General Workers Union of Nigeria in November 1977 were both banned (Proscription Orders Nos. 2 and 3, individually). In 1993 and 1994, numerous strikes organized by NUPENG and PENGASSAN were pronounced unlawful and accused of being politically motivated.

Absence for Frequent Grievance

A grievance is an objection raised by a representative who might be determined by methods accommodated in a collective agreement, a work contract, or by different systems built up by a business organization. Such a grievance may emerge from an infringement of a collective bargaining agreement, the terms of an agreement, the treatment by others in the work environment, or infringement of the law, for example, working environment security controls. Under UK livelihood law, all workers have a legitimate right to raise a grievance, and there is a statutory Act as Code of Practice for taking care of grievances. Ordinarily, there are processes which must be met before a formal protest can be regarded as legitimate. An aggregate grievance is a grumbling raised by two or more representatives in a unionized working environment. Under a few workers, it might likewise be known as a group of work questions. The contrast between a grievance and dissension, in the unionized working environment, is whether the topic identifies with the collective bargaining agreement.

Employee-Commitment

Okon, Asu, Patrick and Antigh (2012) carried out a study to determine the impact of inter-union conflicts on industrial harmony. University of Calabar Teaching Hospital and Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital Calabar were the only tertiary health institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria and the 2575 total staff strength of the two organizations was the study population. A total of 266 respondents were randomly sampled. Pearson Product Moment Correlation test was conducted to test the null hypothesis and it was established that there was significant influence of inter-union conflicts on industrial harmony in the study case. Recommendations to reduce the inter-union conflicts and enhance industrial harmony include, among others, the removal of salary disparity among unions, and the review of law and working conditions. Mac'odo (2006) carried out a study on industrial relations scenario in Textile Industry in Tamil Nadu, India. The paper attempted to identify the changes that have occurred in industrial relations scenario in textile industry in Tamil Nadu after the economic reforms introduced during the nineties. The study concluded that economic reforms affected industrial relations in textile industry in Tamil Nadu as there is a declining tendency in industrial disputes.

The prevailing atmosphere of labour unrest could be attributed to total violation of certain norms of discipline by a section of trade unions and also by some employers. Mojaye and Dedekuma (2015) conducted a study on the influence of communication on Industrial Harmony in the Civil Service of Delta State, Nigeria. They study tried to establish a link between communication and good industrial relations and industrial peace. The study focused on the Delta State Civil Service and attempted to find out the role that effective communication has played in ensuring industrial peace since the advent of the state. Questionnaires were administered to 325 civil servants out of which only 299 were useful. One of the research questions was whether there is any relationship between industrial harmony and effective communication.

The study showed that effective communication may not necessarily lead to good industrial relations but it may engender industrial peace. Fajana (2000) conducted a study on workplace democracy and industrial harmony in Nigeria. This study seeks to unravel the immediate causes

of workplace social distance. In an effort to provide the antidote for workplace cooperation, selected manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt and the sample size determined using Mojaye et al., (2015) sample size was 234. For data analysis, frequencies and descriptive analysis were used. Also, percentages, mean scores and standard deviations were used alongside linear regression to examine the relationship between Workplace democracy and Industrial harmony.

The study revealed that there is a high prevalence of high- structured -organizational communication which creates a gap between labor and management, thus mutual cooperation seemed not to be existing. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used in gathering and analyzing the data and recommendations were obvious that some mutual conditions among which due process, voting and collective bargaining are palliative agents capable of reducing the evident relationship strain between labor and management which has frequently resulted in strikes as the extremes. Neuman (2000) investigated the impact of workers' training programs on industrial strike reduction among industrial workers in Nigeria. The purpose of the study is to ascertain the relevance of workers' training programs, as an alternative approach to human capital formation, to industrial strike reduction among industrial workers in Nigeria. A total of 230 respondents were selected for the study using stratified sampling technique to reflect the two strata of public and private organizations. Two sets of questionnaire, with three subscales, titled Workers Training Programs Scale(WTPS) and Industrial Strike Reduction Scale (ISR)were used for data collection. All the hypothesized research questions were examined using Regression Analysis and T-test statistical method at 0.05 alpha levels. The finding revealed that workers' industrial programs (taken together) has significantly influenced industrial strike reduction among industrial workers. It was also found that only three independent variables (conflict skill, communication skill and interpersonal relations skill training programs) have significantly influenced industrial strike reduction.

However, it was found that management skill and computer skill training programs were not as significant in influencing industrial strike reduction in selected work organizations. Also, there was no significant difference in the level of female and male workers' participation in worker's training programs in both public and private organizations selected for the study. Nkiinebari (2014) investigated the role of national industrial court in sustaining harmony in Nigerian health sector: a case of University of Abuja Teaching Hospital. The main objective is to examine the role National Industrial Court (NIC) has played in sustaining harmony in the Nigerian health sector while the specific objective is to examine the role National Industrial Court has previously played and can still play futuristically to enhance the desired industrial harmony in University of Abuja Teaching Hospital, the entire health sector and other sectors of the economy. This study concludes, that the role of National Industrial Court in sustaining industrial/organizational harmony especially in the health sector cannot be over emphasized.

Basically, industrial harmony is requisite to economic growth, development and industrial advancement in any economy. As such, whether in the instances of inter union disputes or in the dimensions of employee and employer relationship, NIC has risen to the challenge to reduce the rising tensions that might have escalated out of proportion in UATH as well as other institutions. Nkiinebari (2015) studied employee engagement and workplace harmony in Nigerian Civil Service. The study attempted to examine the extent to which employee engagement can significantly influence the degree of workplace harmony in the Nigerian civil service. Samples of 400 employees were randomly drawn from 10 ministries in the Rivers State Civil Service, Nigeria. Structured questionnaires items were administered on the sampled respondents and data

gathered were tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics for relationship in the hypothesis one as well as the independent T-test analysis for test of influence of the hypothesis two.

Results revealed a significant relationship and influence of the variables of employee engagement on workplace harmony in the studied sector. The results culminated into our conclusion that employee engagement is a critical non-financial incentive that has significant relationship on workplace harmony. Thus, it is recommended that institutional collaboration between management and employees, employee career enhancement as well leadership cooperation should be encouraged to attract workforce loyalty to the vision and mission of the state civil service. Fajana (2000) carried out a study on securing a harmonious working environment through effective industrial relations at workplace: from the Nigerian perspective. The study was motivated by the need to create harmonious working environment devoid of strike actions in Nigeria. The study made use of primary data sourced from 220 respondents through administering of questionnaire. Their responses were tested using appropriate statistical tools like the simple percentage and the Chi-square research techniques; the study revealed that Harmonious Working Environment can be secured through Effective Industrial relations at workplace only that the challenges confronting the unions have not made their activities effective in a way. Therefore, the study recommended that organizations should create enabling environment for union activities to thrive by assisting them where necessary so as to stabilize the organization (John, 2018).

Yonder and Staudohar (2002) conducted a conceptual study on the title: Employers and the Enhancement of Industrial Harmony in Private Sector Organizations in Nigeria. The study examines the role of employers in enhancing industrial harmony in organizations with a focus on private sector organizations in Nigeria. The paper posits that conflict is inevitable in all organizations and, as such, the employer who has the responsibility of making major organizational policies to achieve corporate objectives must play a dominant role in ensuring industrial harmony. The paper exposes some of the factors that undermine industrial harmony and productivity in private sector organizations to include leadership behavior, lack of effective communication, work environment, and non-recognition of trade union as a bargaining party. It further explicates that productivity and growth are not fully enhanced because of management's practice of exclusionism, poor labor-management policies, and dehumanization of work environment. As panacea to mitigate conflict and promote a culture of harmony that will achieve organizational goal, the study proposes that management of private sector organizations in Nigeria should fashion out a framework of joint committee/expanded collective bargaining", create work culture that is based on collaboration and team work, initiate participatory management and develop and enthrone an effective communication process. Instituting these measures will help to close conflictual loopholes that hinder industrial harmony and productivity in private sector organizations in Nigeria.

Pyman et al., (2010) investigated management practices and industrial harmony in oil and gas firms in Rivers State, Nigeria, The study examined the relationship between Management Practice and Industrial Harmony on the Oil and Gas Firms in Rivers State. Sample size of 343 were derived using Taro Yamane formula to form the population of 2400 respondents that consist of managers and employees in twelve oil and gas firms in Rivers State. Descriptive survey method of research was adopted and data were collected through questionnaire. The demographic data were analyzed using simple percentage, and Mean score was used in the

analysis of items on the questionnaire. The Spearman's Rank Correlation statistical method was used to test the seven hypotheses at 0.01 level of significance which was facilitated by Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software. The results revealed a significant relationship between Management practices and Industrial Harmony. It was also found that organizational culture significantly moderates the relationship between managerial practices and industrial harmony in Oil and Gas Companies in Rivers State.

Presentation of data by graphic analysis

Determination of the Existence of a Positive Relationship between Joint Consultations

Strategies and employee commitment

According to Neuman, (2000), a scatter-graph is one of the ways used to identify if a bivariate positive linear relationship exists between interval-scaled variables. Based on the assertion by Neuman (2000), the researcher therefore plotted a scatter-graph using SPSS computer software, version 22.0 to ascertain the existence of a linear relationship between joint consultation strategies and employee commitment and if a linear relationship does exist and also to ascertain the form and direction of the relationship as shown below.

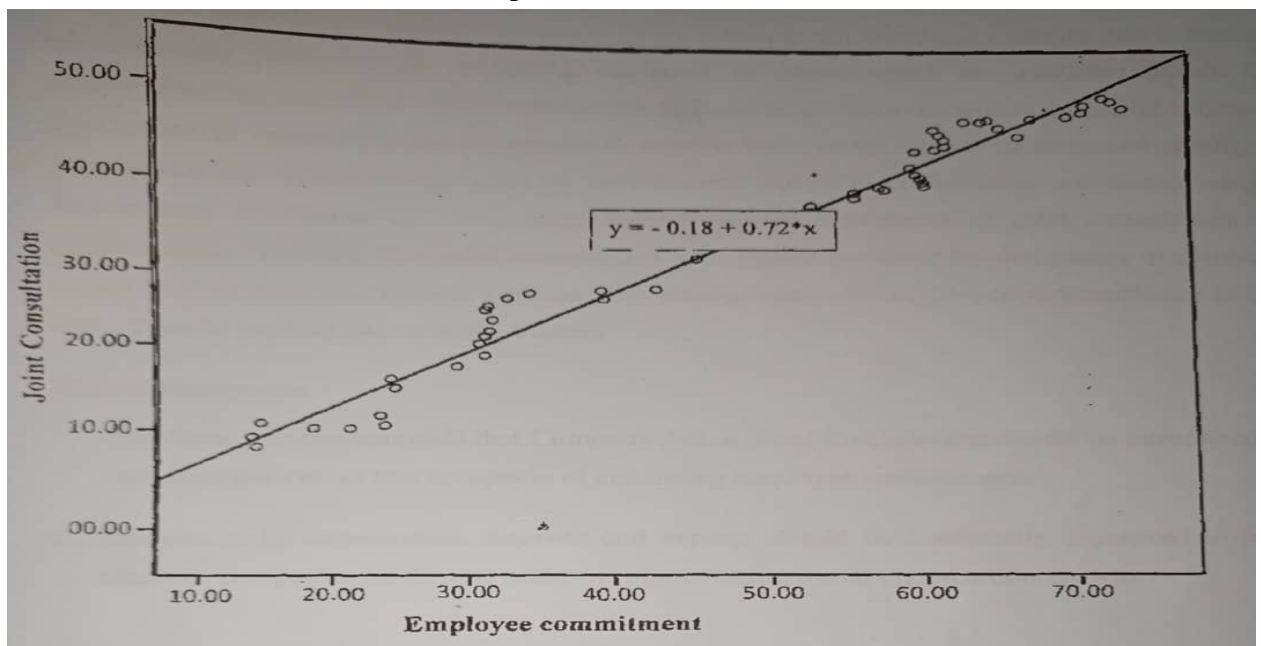


Diagram of the Relationship b/w Joint Consultation and Employee Commitment Source; SPSS 22.0 Bivariate Output,2020.

The criterion variable being joint consultation was plotted on the Y-axis against the predictor variable being joint consultation strategies, plotted on the X-axis. The outward line in the scatter diagram sloping upwards from left to right show the existence of a linear and positive association between the predictor variable (employee commitment) and the criterion variable (joint consultation) to be linear in a positive direction. The evidence of an existing relationship between the study variables through the plot of a scatter diagram as illustrated in above became the foundation upon which the researcher relied on and proceeded with the bivariate analysis of the data in a bid to test the hypotheses formulated for the study.

Conclusion

The paper then concludes as shown by the SPSS graph that Joint Consultation is capable of enhancing efficiency by increasing the stock of ideas; which are available within the organization because of the wider exposure of an issue or problem; to reduce industrial action as it provides an opportunity for employees to express their view; it leads to increased employee satisfaction due to the greater level of commitment that joint consultative committee brings. Researchers (Pyman et al, 201) have highlighted the usefulness of joint consultation in organizations, reporting that joint consultation was highly favored by companies at different stages in their development towards a partnership arrangement with employee representative in the area of policy making and strategic matters.

Recommendations

1. The paper then recommends that Company Act on Joint Consultation should be introduced in industrial policies as this is capable of enhancing employee commitment.
2. Workshops by organization theorists and experts should be continually organized to help sensitize companies on the relevance of joint consultation in organizational growth.

REFERENCES

1. Fajana, S.(2000).Conflict tactics and strategies of Nigerian trade unions: Convergence, diversity and implications. Nigerian Journal of Personnel,4 (1),23-28.
2. John, M.(2018). Organization Image in the Practice of Industrial Relations: Issues of Emotional Benefits. Journal of Management and Social Sciences 6(2),183-187.
3. Mac'Odo, D.S. (2006).Statistics for Decision Making. Port Harcourt: Linnet Paul Publications.
4. Mojaye, E.M. & Dedekuma, S.E. (2015). Influence of Communication on Industrial Harmony in the Civil Service of Delta State, Nigeria, New Media and Mass Communication, JSSN 2224-3275(online).Vol.37.
5. Neuman, W.I. (2000). Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
6. Nkinebari, N.P. (2014). Workplace democracy and industrial harmony in Nigeria. International Journal of Innovative Research and Development, 3(1),441-446.
7. Okon, B.A., Asu, O. T., Patrick, A.E. & Antigh, B.U. (2012). The Impact, of Inter-union Conflict on Industrial Harmony: The Case of Tertiary Health Institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria.
8. Onah. F.O.(2008). Human Resource management (2nd edition). Enugu: John Jacob's Classic Publishers Ltd.
9. Pyman, A., Holland, P., Teicher, J. &Cooper, B.K.(2010). Industrial Relations Climate, Employee Voice and Managerial Attitudes to Unions: An Australians Study British. Journal of Industrial Relations 8(2).
10. Ukoni O.I. & Gideon, A.E. (2006). The Role of National Industrial Courts in sustaining harmony in Nigerian Health Sector: A Case of University of Abuja Teaching Hospital. Journal of Management and Sustainability, 6(1).
11. Yoder. D.,& Staudohar, P.D. (2002). Personnel management and industrial relations (7th Edition)New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc.