

STRIKE ACTIONS AND OUTPUT OF EMPLOYEES OF MANUFACTURING COMPANIES IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated strike action and employee output in manufacturing companies in Rivers State. The correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 264 managers of twenty-two (22) companies in Rivers State, Nigeria. The census sampling techniques was used to draw a sample size of 264 respondents. Retrieved data from 252 respondents were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean, standard deviation and inferential statistic of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis to test the formulated hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance respectively. The findings were made: There is a significant relationship between strike actions and employee output quality of manufacturing companies in Rivers State. It was therefore, recommended that government should enforce and ensure that Nigerian labour laws are complied with by all company management/executives, setting up of good negotiation panel/communication network on matters concerning terms and conditions of employment and performance of the organization.

Keyword: Strike Action, Employee Output Quality, Workforce Productivity

INTRODUCTION

For manufacturing companies to be productive and yet achieve industrial harmony there are certain factors that have to be recognized such as the interactions among stakeholders in the organization, which includes the relationship between employers, employees, rivals/competitors, host communities and the government. The researchers are saying that the activities of these people have relationship in one way or the other with the productivity of the enterprise particularly the manufacturing firms since human beings are the main resource of the manufacturing companies in Nigeria. This is because interactions between members of any unit are not devoid of disagreements or conflict situations and the time spent in resolving these disagreements affects the productivity of the individual employee as well as the organization directly or indirectly.

Furthermore, disagreement in most cases grows like a burning flame of fire and degenerate to industrial actions such as: Strike; (strike frequency, duration and verities), lockouts; (machine shutdown, primitive lockout and personnel lockout), layoff, protests, picketing, plant closure or removal and so on which sometimes have very indubitable demonic influence on the efficiency and effectiveness of the employees particularly on their creative ability to deliver quality product and services. However, in spite of these actions, the managers seem to be one step ahead of subordinates, as most times the subordinates take a surrendering but necessary step to return and maintain a balance of corporate co-existence. But the more the Nigerian managers continue to pay lip service to corporate co-existence, the more these managers will run ring around the neck of their subordinates Jaja, (2015) resulting to employees' low morale and productivity. Meanwhile, in chapters four and five of this study, we will whisper into your waiting ears for re-registration in your minds the secret of how these demonic practices can be broken in the Nigerian workplaces especially in the manufacturing sector.

Unequivocally, in both managerial and non-managerial ranks, we are saddled with crisis of confidence, copycat syndrome, wobbling degree of freedom of action, formation of cult of strategic thinkers, and floating gimmicks within and outside the Nigerian work environment Jaja (2015). Based on the foregoing, we've seen some psycho-socio managerial abuses, that to me, the need for resolving them cries out Atuma (2012). Some of these were tragic, some were idiotic, and

some were hilariously funny (Okpu, 2012), the case of employer-employee relations in the Nigerian manufacturing companies.

Hypothesis

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between strike actions and output of employees of manufacturing companies in Rivers State.

Strike Actions

Strike actions could be caused due to dispute relating to minimum wages; salary and incentive issues; increment is not up to the performance; dissatisfaction with the policies of the company; hours of work and interval timings; holidays and leaves with pay; bonus, provident fund, and gratuity; withdrawal of any facility or allowance; and wrongful dismissal of workmen. In Nigeria, the most obvious reason of strike is the non-payment of wages or salaries to the workers of the factory by the employers. Industrial Disputes Act 1947, Strike means "a cessation of work by a body of persons employed in any industry acting in combination or a concerted refusal under a common understanding of any number of persons who are or have been so employed, to continue to work or to accept employment". Mere stoppage of work does not come within the meaning of strike unless it can be shown that such stoppage of work was a concerted action for the enforcement of an industrial demand. Strikes in the workplace could be seen in the form of economic, sympathetic, general, sit at home, etc. Economic strike refers to when labors stop their work to enforce their economic demands such as wages and bonus. In these kinds of strikes, workers ask for increase in wages, allowances like traveling allowance, house rent allowance, dearness allowance, bonus and other facilities such as increase in privilege leave and casual leave. The sympathetic strike is perceived when workers of one unit or industry go on strike in sympathy with workers of another unit or industry who are already on strike, it is called a sympathetic strike. The members of other unions involve themselves in a strike to support or express their sympathy with the members of unions who are on strike in other undertakings. The workers of sugar industry may go on strike in sympathy with their fellow workers of the textile industry who may already be on strike. General strike means a strike by members of all or most of the unions in a region or an industry. It may be a strike of all the workers in a particular region of industry to force demands common to all the workers. These strikes are usually intended to create political pressure on the ruling government, rather than on any one employer. It may also be an extension of the sympathetic strike to express generalized protest by the workers. In sit down strike workers do not absent themselves from their place of work when they are on strike. They keep control over production facilities. But do not work. Such a strike is also known as 'pen down' or 'tool down' strike. Workers show up to their place of employment, but they refuse to work. They also refuse to leave, which makes it very difficult for employer to defy the union and take the workers' places. In June 1998, all the Municipal Corporation employees in Punjab observed a pen down strike to protest against the non-acceptance of their demands by the state government. Go-slow is yet another form of industrial protest in which workmen do not stop the work but deliberately slow-down the process of production in order to cause loss of production to the employer. It must be noted that there is no cessation of work at all, and in fact, workmen pretend themselves as engaged in doing their work. In hunger strike workmen resort to fasting near the workplace in order to demand the employer to redress their grievances. Wild cat strikes are conducted by workers or employees without the authority and consent of unions. In 2004, a significant number of advocated went on wildcat strike at the City Civil Court premises in Bangalore. They were protesting against some remarks allegedly made against them by an Assistant Commissioner. A strike that embraces all workers involved in a dispute and that will continue for 'as long as it takes' to secure a settlement. All-out strikes can be contrasted with selective strikes that involve only a proportion of the workforce and protest strikes that may last for only a day or two. In this study the manifestation of strike actions could be seen in strike frequency, strike duration and strike variety.

Strike Frequency

The regularity of cessation of work by the employees in the work place is what Professor Zeb-Obipi described as Strike frequency. It is obvious in Nigeria today that job insecurity and wage are nightmare on the part of the employees thus every now and then employees are clustering forming Unions with duplicated objectives all in the name of protecting their jobs. Strike action is a dispute, difference, or struggle between two parties that is indicated by open expression of hostility and/or intentional interference in the goal achievement of opposing party (Fajana, 2000). Striking involves withdrawing services by employees (in any sector) in a democratic state to realize particular goals in the workplace. Striking is generally the last resort to solving a problem and occurs when the collective bargaining process makes insufficient inroads and the unions are not satisfied with management's offer to correct the situation. Strikes are common worldwide. Since the 12th century BC, strikes were (and still often are) believed to be the only method by which employees could express discontent with their working environments and achieve desired outcomes. Many discussions of industrial action simply refer to strikes. Strikes are the most overt and the most significant aspect of industrial disputes. But they are unfortunately only a part of the phenomenon of conflict (Fashoyin, 2005). It has been argued that the examination of conflict should be expanded to include "the total range of behavior and attitudes that express opposition and managers on the one hand, and working people and their organizations on the other (Kornhauser, Dubin & Ross, 1954). Judging from the sources and causes of industrial actions, it is overt to believe that strike is endemic in Nigeria work places which the manufacturing companies are not exception. For instance, the duties of employer as defined by common law which states that "employers are bound by duty to provide lodging and boarding to employees, duty to indemnity of employer against liabilities and losses in course of doing the work, duty to provide the job in which you are employed' etc. It is also imperative to state that the definition of causes of industrial disputes according to (Yesuf, 1984), Research and General Explanation, Management Actions and Unions Incitement, Trade Dispute Acts, the constitution etc. are ambiguous and contradicting that employers and employees found it difficult to blend thus regular incidence of strike.

Strikes have become a global phenomenon with increasing incidence in many countries and the potential to impact negatively on the productivity of employee in socio-economic development of manufacturing companies in Nigeria. In most democratic societies, strikes are a legitimate part of collective bargaining during labour negotiations. Strikes have been reported in highly developed countries such as USA, UK, New Zealand, Germany and France. Also in less developed countries such as Nigeria, Malawi and Zambia to name but a few. Kennie (2009) asserts that strikes occur globally, it appears the impact of strikes are more severely felt in less developed countries because of the poorer socioeconomic circumstances and embedded infrastructural deficiencies.

Striking employees face a loss of income, job insecurity, and emotional distress, plus long hours of work for employees who choose not to participate in the strike action Bankole, (2005). Whether or not their demands are eventually met, employees that have been involved in strikes usually end up disillusioned and demotivated and may end up emigrating overseas or relocating within the country thereby leading to either internal or external brain drain. For example, striking employees in Lagos State reported an "overwhelming feeling of complete lack of confidence and trust in the hospital management team (Buhari, 2010). The impact of such movements could be as severe as occurred leading to several manufacturing companies to fold up due to a prolonged strike (Nnenna, 2013). It could also lead to a situation where major manufacturing companies such as "Michelin Nigeria Plc (producers of motor tyre and tube)" quitted the country due to poor Workforce Productivity and high production cost.

Strike Duration

Strike duration has to do with the length of time spent in strike actions and resolution in organization. As stated in the judgment delivered in the national Industrial Court holding at Lagos

by Hon. Justice B. B. Kanyip (presiding) and others dated 02/04/2009 in the case of the Management of Nestle Nigeria Plc Ilupeju, Lagos and National Union of Food, Beverages & Ors on wrongful termination of appointment of the union unit chairman; and unfair labour practice. The court referred to the award of the IAP reinstating Mr. O. O. Okunuga without loss of salary and other emoluments. Therefore the National Industrial Court affirmed that if IAP did not think that eleven (11) years' time lag between the termination and judgment was too long to have adversely affected the order of reinstatement and payment of salaries and other benefits, we see no reason to depart from that position regarding the present dispute. We are of the view that the same principle is applicable in this case and we have been shown no reason to change our position in this case. In a true life experience, an effective employee who is out of professional job for over ten years (assuming the person is 40 years before the termination) could not be same effective at age of 50 years leading to decrease in employee productivity.

Strike Varieties

Generally speaking, a strike can be looked at in various ways as a course of action determining the psychology of men at work or as an action for some economic cause or to serve some political end. For whether purpose or in whatever form they are launched, strikes may be broadly classical into primary and secondary strikes. Primary strikes include but not limited to; stay away strike, Sit-down and Stay-in strike, tools-down/Pen-down strike, Token or Protest strike, Lightning or Cat-call strike, Go- Slow, Picketing and boycott, Gherao, and Hunger strike. While the primary strikes is based on the direct demand of those in strike, the secondary strikes is compensatory and is a type of strike in which the striking employees have no demands or grievances of their own against their employer but they go on strike for the purpose of directly aiding or supporting others in their cause. In other words employees have no direct interest in the advancement of the cause of the strike. Such a strike is an unjustifiable invasion of the right of employers and is generally unlawful (Mamoria, 2011). In whatever ways we look at strike, its effect is endemic and odious to the development and productivity of an employee and the organisation. The diagram below shows the varieties and forms of strike in the Nigeria work places.

Employee Output Quality

Quality in this work is defined as the ability of a product or service to satisfy the purpose for which it was meant to serve. Output quality on the other hand is seen as the extent to which a product actualizes the organizational goal. Therefore, it is essential to put strategies in place to improve our output quality. Bergmann and Scarpello, (2001) opined that compensation systems have traditionally been designed to attract and retain employees and to motivate them to increase their effort and outputs toward the achievement of organizational goals. Juran, (2013) said that quality is the hardest aspect of Workforce Productivity to measure. The common element of the business definitions is that the quality of a product or service refers to the perception of the degree to which the product or service meets the customer's expectations. Quality has no specific meaning unless related to a specific function and/or object. It is not easy to define the word quality since it is perceived differently by the different set of individuals. If experts are asked to define quality, they may give varied responses depending on their individual preferences (Juran, 2013).

Empirically, the experience of NLNG Bonny shows that output quality has strong relationship with workplace unrest. The output quality actually increased when employees discovered that their senior colleagues have cut down on their salary in order to retain them on the work. The effect of this attitude of the management staff NLNG Bonny led to high level of employee royalty and commitment to duty among employees in the organization. It was also observed that workers spent less time to match certain output level as the quantity of barrels of oil they produce increased drastically when compared to what they use to produce in a given timeframe. Consequently, a friendly work environment devoid of industrial unrest that is capable of distorting the output quality is necessary for improved workforce productivity.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Based on the nature of this study as a correlational study, cross-sectional research design was used to generate data in a non-contrived setting.

Population

the manufacturing companies in Rivers State. The total respondents of this study consisted of a total of 743 (Seven hundred and forty three) employees of managerial positions (first line, middle line and top line managers) in the Personnel, Account/Finance, Marketing and Production departments from four manufacturing companies out of the top 22 (twenty-two) registered manufacturing companies domiciled in Rivers State. **Source:** Manufacturers Association of Nigeria.

Sampling Procedures and Sampling Technique

Detailed Presentation of Population and Sample Size

S/N	Industries	Population	Sample size
1.	Dangote group	230	80
2.	DUFIL Prima Foods	148	52
3.	Nestle Nigeria	155	54
4.	Unilever Nigeria	210	74
Total		743	260

Source: Field Survey (2019).

Result

Presentation of the result of the relationship between Strike and the employees output quality

Correlations

		Strike		Output quality	
Strike	Pearson Correlation	1	.918**	.930**	.930**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	252	252	252	252
	Pearson Correlation	.918**	1	.848**	.783**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	252	252	252	252
Output quality	Pearson Correlation	.930**	.848**	1	.928**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	252	252	252	252
	Pearson Correlation	.930**	.783**	.928**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	252	252	252	252

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

Discussion of Findings

As found in the study, when strike actions are minimized among manufacturing firms, service delivery tends to be quality in nature as employees put in their best while conforming to the

expectations of management laid before them. In the scenario of disagreement, we are saying that even if a product is invented or produces by the best thinking minded employee or that the product has all it takes to be of expected quality, that the way and manner in which the product is delivered should take into cognizance, when, where and how it was delivered to actually meet the demand of the customers (Okerekeet al, 2018; Omenka, 2015). Therefore, if the product fails to arrive as expected to really serve the purpose for which it was made, service quality should not be accepted to as a good measure of employee productivity. In other words, service quality can be defined as the difference between customer expectation of service and the perceived service. Example; if expectation is greater than the satisfaction gained then the customer is dissatisfied Zeithamal, (1990). However, Strike (2009) stated that it is said to be a termination of employment, a negative response to job or a negative response to carry on labor with some workers performing in mixture or in recital or in accord by a general awareness for the reason of forcing their boss to concur to conditions of engagement or to support counterparts to perform identically. The facts that strike actions has the propensity to hamper the efficiency of services quality delivery as the employee will try to always defend their union (group interest) sometimes at the detriment of their personal company objectives.

CONCLUSION

The change can be due to poor communication between manager and employee repeated tardiness, absenteeism and misconduct. Furthermore, conflict create bad feelings, resentment and hostility that would not enable the employees to work together as a team and a resultant decline in work performance, low productivity, loss of customers, high labour turnover, adverse effects on the goodwill of the organization and complete collapse of the organization". In sum, all tested hypothesis indicated strong, positive and significant relationship between the study variables which inspired our decision to reject all formal null stated hypothesis and restated that industrial disputes actually influence the workforce productivity of manufacturing companies in Rivers State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Employees' union should be given fair hearing on issues bordering the on the peace, harmony and productivity of employees among manufacturing companies in Rivers State.
2. Employees should be taught appropriate industrial relations behaviours and need for skill development and enhancement, in order to promote their productivity.
3. Management of manufacturing companies should maintain ample designation of authority and sustainable industrial democracy in the organization.

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