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Assessment of Industrial Action in Selected Colleges of Education in South Western Nigeria: Implications for Counselling Practice

Odeleye D.A.
Associate Professor, Department of Education, Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria
Owoseni A. A.
Chief Lecturer, College of Education, Ikere Ekiti, Nigeria

Abstract:
This research study examined industrial conflict in selected Colleges of Education, South-Western Nigeria. Opinions of two thousand, nine hundred and thirty one (2,931) academic and non-academic staff of three College of Education in South Western Nigeria viz- College of Education, Ikere-Ekiti in Ekiti State, Osun State College of Education, Ilesha, Osun State and Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo, Oyo State were randomly sampled using questionnaires. Three hypotheses were tested. Results revealed that age, ($\beta=0.16$, t= 4.37; P<.05), marital status ($\beta=0.09$, t= 3.28; P<.05) religion ($\beta=0.08$, t= 3.08; P<.05), academic qualification ($\beta=0.22$, t= 6.70; P<.05), and job designation ($\beta=0.55$, t= 15.21; P<.05) had significant independent prediction and joint [$R^2 = 0.25$, F (7,1271) = 61.04 ; P <.05] prediction on industrial conflict in the Colleges of Education under study. Results also revealed that there was a significant interaction effect of gender, work perception and union membership on industrial conflict in the College of Education [F (1, 1271) =21.31; P<.05]. It was also found out that there was a significant positive relationship between work perception and industrial conflict among the staff of the Colleges of Education (r (1270) = 11; P<.05]. Also, there was a significant difference between academic and non academic staff on their perception on industrial conflict (t (1270) = 17.06; P<.05). Results further revealed that there was a significant difference between the trade unions on their perception of industrial conflict [F (2, 1271) =157.22; P<.05]. Job status of both academic (t (412) = 6.77; P<.05) and non-academic (t (856) = 3.17; P<.05) staff had significant differences on their perception of industrial conflict. The implications of this study for counselling practice were discussed and several recommendations were suggested.

Keywords: Industrial action, conflict, college of education staff

1. Introduction

Filley (1975) observed that as human beings, we live our lives within a web of social relationships, most of which seem almost mechanical in their predictability and smoothness of functions. We seek, establish and maintain predictable patterns in our lives to avoid the anxiety of the unpredictable. Such patterns, once established, require little conscious choice as they operate. We have predictable patterns for interacting with our family and for socializing with others. Yet, because we are not solely mechanical, because we are social creatures in a social system, these patterns are not absolutely predictable.

Within our various social relationships, noted Boulding (1964), are some which involve real or perceived differences between two or more parties or individuals. Where the interests of the parties are mutually exclusive, that is, where the gains of one party's goal are at the expense of the others or where the parties have different values; then, the resulting social interaction between the parties contain fertile grounds for conflict.

The term conflict usually refers to a condition in which one identifiable group of human beings – whether tribal, cultural, economic or political – is engaged in conscious opposition to one or more identifiable human groups because these groups are pursuing what appear to be incompatible goals (Dougherty and Pfattzgreffe Jnr, 1971) As Best (2007) noted, conflict is a fluid and infinitely elastic concept which can be twisted into different shapes and has become an issue over which scholars find themselves in sharp disagreement with their colleagues.   In spite of this fact, Stagner (2004) defined conflict as a "situation in which two or more human beings desire goals which they perceive as being attainable by one or the other but not by both. Bossart (1980) considered it as "any instance when incompatible activities occur, which may be between two or more persons, groups or nations" For Chaplen (1979), it is "a simultaneous occurrence of two or more mutually antagonistic impulses or motives" while Coser (1914), a leading expert in the

field, defined it as " a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure and eliminate their rivals"

Fisher (2000) defined conflict as "a social situation in which there are perceived incompatibilities in goals or values between two (or more) parties, attempts by the parties to control one another and antagonistic feelings towards each other" Thus, whenever important differences exist between groups, there is a potential for inter group conflict to occur.

Industrial conflict in organizations especially those established on a large scale sprang up from the very concept of industrialization and the emergence of the industrial revolution. In fact, as stated by Haralambos and Holborn (2003), the industrial revolution itself was the second major source of modern attitudes to work. Thompson (1967) argued that large-scale, machine powered industry necessitated the introduction of new working patterns and with them new attitudes. According to him, pre industrial work was regulated by task orientation; and the necessities of job determined when and how hard people worked.

Within our various social relationships, noted Boulding (1964), are some which involve real or perceived differences between two or more parties. Where the interest of the parties are mutually exclusive, that is, where the gains of one party's goal are at the cost of the other's or where the parties have different values – then the resulting social interaction between the parties contains fertile ground for conflict.

The word "conflict" is derived from several Latin words. For example, "fligere" meaning to strike, or "confligere" which means to strike together, to clash or from "conflictins" meaning a fight, especially a prolonged struggle or clashing together of physical bodies (Azar 1990). Lake and Rothschild (1996) contended that from the human sphere, and the fact of war, conflict has, at an early date, been transferred to natural (physical) processes. There is the tendency also to shift the centre of the term to psychic state, harbouring opposing ideas, feelings, striving and finally to collisions of tendencies and claims that are, or appear to be incompatible (Scarborough; 1998). In other words, "conflict happens when two pieces of matter try to occupy the same space at the same time". They will conflict as they strike together. In this respect, Stagner (2004) viewed conflict as "a situation in which two or more human beings desire goals which they perceive as being attainable by one or the other but not by both". Writing much earlier, Bossart (1980) sees conflict as any instance when incompatible activities occur, which may be between two or more persons, groups or nations. He thus sees conflict as a struggle to resist, come into collision or as contest between opposing forces. In other words, mutual dependence between parties in conflict is necessary to make collision a mutual concern and a problem to solve.

2. Hypotheses

For this study, the following hypotheses were postulated:

 (a) Gender, age, marital status and work experience of staff would individually and jointly influence industrial conflicts in the selected Colleges of Education;

(b) Work perception and union membership of various categories of staff would individually and jointly affect the incidence of industrial conflict in the selected Colleges of Education;

(c) There is no significant difference between occupational status and industrial conflict in the selected Colleges of Education

3. Methodology

The population of this study consisted of all two thousand, nine hundred and thirty-one (2931) academic and non-academic members of staff from three selected Nigerian Colleges of Education. The three Colleges of Education were selected from the South West Nigeria. The three Colleges of Education were: Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo, Oyo State; College of Education Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State and the Osun State College of Education, Ilesa, Osun State.

s/n	College of Education	Staff population
1.	College of Education Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State (COEI)	1043
2.	Osun State College of Education Ilesha, Osun State (OSSCOE)	1008
3.	Emmanuel Alayande College of Education Oyo, Oyo state (EACOE)	880
	TOTAL	2931

Table 1
Source: Respective Colleges Registry as at November 15, 2009.

The three Colleges of Education are state owned and state funded. They are very similar in terms of organizational structure, management and union activities and membership.

One thousand six hundred (1,600) questionnaires were administered to the members of staff of the three-sampled institutions. However, most probably due to the busy schedule, the non-availability of some respondents for the retrieval of the instrument coupled with the uncompleted information supplied by some of respondents, the sample size came to 1272. This constitutes 43.4 percentage of the total population of the three Colleges of Education. In all, the sample size comprises of 434 respondents in OSSCOE, 484 in COEI, and 354 in EACOE.

A purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the Colleges of Education used for the study. A multistage sampling technique was used for this study because of the nature of the study and the large population of the subjects. Two probability sampling methods were used. The two methods were used sequentially.   A stratified sampling method was first employed in which the population was grouped into some definite categories – using union membership. The second probability sampling method used was simple random

sampling (by balloting) thus ensuring that every member of both the academic and non academic staff has an equal chance of appearing in the selection.

The stratified sampling technique was used basically for two reasons. The first reason is the fact of the large population size of the research. Secondly, the subjects have non-uniform characteristics in terms of several variables such as union membership, job status, and age. The second reason called for further simple random sampling by balloting. Thus, the members of staff of each College of Education were grouped according to their union membership. This posed no problem because the nomenclature attached to union affiliation is uniform across the three Colleges of Education.

The principle of simple randomization, using the balloting technique, was thereafter adopted to give every subject in the population an equal chance to appear in the selection.

4. Instrument

A self-constructed questionnaire was used to elicit the needed information from the respondents. Section A comprises of various socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, length of service, union membership, religion, job status, sex and marital status. These variables form the bulk of independent variables used for this study.

Demographic variables like gender, religion, union membership and marital status in section A of the questionnaire were scored in nominal format. This implies that the numbers assigned to the variables have no real meaning or value except that they enabled us partition responses or categorise objects according to their group membership. Thus, various numerical labels were assigned to these socio-demographic variables for the purpose of analysis. However, age, qualification, job status, and length of service were assigned ordinal values for the analysis.

The instrument in section B measures the frequency of the various types of industrial conflicts in Nigeria Colleges of Education. The industrial conflicts questionnaire (ICQ) was designed to measure the disposition of respondents to indulge in or desire to participate in industrial conflict. This questionnaire is in section C of the instrument used for this study. It was scored thus; Strongly Agreed = 5, Agreed = 4, Undecided = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagreed = 1. The scores were added together. A score greater than the mean value of 57.58 is considered high while a score below the mean value is considered low.

Section D of the instrument measures the work perception of the respondents. Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of the Industrial Conflict Scale was 0.93 while that of the Work Perception Scale was 0.76

5. Data Analysis

The seven hypotheses generated for this study were tested with four parametric tests viz: independent t-test, Pearson r correlation analysis, Multiple Regression analysis, One Way Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) and 2 X 2 X 3 Analyses of Variance (ANOVA).

6. Test of Hypotheses and Findings

All the hypotheses stated for this study were generated through a careful study of the concept of industrial conflict and an examination of the need for new areas that have yet to be explored; a kind of lacuna that currently exists and needs to be filled in the area of investigation. Each hypothesis was tested using the relevant statistical method.

6.1. Hypothesis One

Gender, age, marital status, religion, qualification, Job designation and length of service will not significantly, independently and jointly predict industrial conflict among the staff of the Selected Colleges of Education.

Predictors	β	t	P	R^2	F	P
Job Designation	0.55	15.21	<.05			
Qualification	0.22	6.70	<.05			
Age	0.16	4.37	<.05			
Length of service	0.11	2.76	<.05			
Marital status	0.09	3.28	<.05			
Religion	0.08	3.08	<.05	0.25	61.04	<.05
Gender	0.02	0.78	>.05			

Table 2: Regression of Industrial Conflicts on the Predictor Variables
n =1272, β = Standardized regression weight computed at the end of each step, R^2 = Adjusted R^2
Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2009

Table 2 above shows the hierarchical multiple correlation analyses. The results showed that gender did not have significant independent prediction on industrial conflict among the staff of the selected Colleges of Education (β=0.02, t= 0.78; P>.05). The table also revealed that age had significant independent prediction on industrial conflict among the staff of Colleges of Education (β=0.16, t= 4.37; P<.05). Also, marital status had significant independent prediction on industrial conflict among the staff of the selected Colleges of Education (β=0.09, t= 3.28; P<.05). It was also revealed that religion had significant independent prediction on industrial conflict among the staff of the selected Colleges of Education (β=0.08, t= 3.08; P<.05). Also, academic qualification (β=0.22, t= 6.70; P<.05) and job designation (β=0.55, t= 15.21; P<.05) had significant independent prediction on industrial conflict among the staff of

the selected Colleges of Education. Also, length of service have significant independent prediction on industrial conflict among staff of the selected College of Education (β=0.11, t= 2.76; P<.05).

Altogether, all the predictor variables of gender, age, marital status, religion, academic qualification, union membership and length of service accounted for 25% of the total variance in industrial conflict among the staff of the selected Colleges of Education [R^2 = 0.25, F (7, 1271)= 61.04, P<.05].

Thus, the null hypothesis which states that gender, age, marital status, religion, qualification, job status and work experience will not significantly, independently and jointly predict industrial conflict among the staff of the selected Colleges of Education is rejected.

6.2. Hypothesis Two

There is no significant main and interaction effect of gender, union membership and work perception on causes of industrial conflicts in Nigerian Colleges of Education.

SOURCE	SS	DF	MS	F	P
Work Perception (A)	5876.73	1	5927.87	43.15	<.05
Gender (B)	10767.27	1	10825.02	78.80	<.05
Union Membership (C)	3916.14	2	1918.55	13.97	<.05
A X B	3732.28	1	3732.28	27.17	<.05
A X C	24260.70	2	12130.35	88.30	<.05
B X C	5854.05	2	2927.03	21.31	<.05
A X B X C	12453.65	1	12453.65	90.65	<.05
Error	173234.80	1261	137.38		
Total	280959.09	1271			

Table 3: Summary of 2X2X3 ANOVA showing the significant influence of gender, work perception and union membership on causes of industrial conflicts
Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2009

Results in table 3 revealed that work perception has significant main interaction influence on perceived industrial conflicts among the staff of the selected Colleges of Education [F(1,1271) = 43.15; P<.05]. Gender also showed significant main interaction influence on industrial conflict [F (1, 1271) =78.80; P<.05]. Also, union membership had significant main interaction influence on industrial conflict [F (1, 1271) =13.97; P<.05].

Moreover, the table revealed a significant interaction effect of work perception and gender (A X B) on industrial conflicts among the staff of Nigerian Colleges of Education [F(1,1271) = 27.17; P<.05]. Also, the result showed a significant interaction effect of work perception and union membership (A X C) on industrial conflicts among the staff of Nigerian Colleges of Education [F(1,1271) = 88.30; P<.05]. Findings also revealed that there was a significant interaction effect of work perception and union membership (B X C) on industrial conflicts among the staff of Nigerian Colleges of Education [F(1,1271) = 21.31; P<.05]. Also, there was a significant interaction effect of gender, work perception and union membership (A X B X C) on industrial conflicts among the staff of Nigerian Colleges of Education [F(1,1271) = 90.65; P<.05].

Thus, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant main and interaction effect of gender, union membership and work perception on causes of industrial conflicts in the selected Colleges of Education is rejected.

6.3. Hypothesis Three

There is no significant relationship between work perception and industrial conflict among the staff of the selected Colleges of Education.

VARIABLES	N	X	S.D	df	r-cal	r-crit	P
Work perception	1272	24.21	3.94				
				1272	.11	1.65	<.05
Industrial conflict	1272	57.36	14.86				

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Coefficient table showing the relationship between work perception and industrial conflicts among the staff of the selected Colleges of Education
Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2009

Table 4 above revealed that there is a significant relationship between work perception and industrial conflict among the staff of the selected Colleges of Education [r (1270) = .11; P <.05]. The significant positive correlation between the two variables implies that the higher an employee's level of work perception, the higher his/her disposition towards industrial conflict and vice versa.

Thus, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between work perception and industrial conflicts among the staff of the selected Colleges of Education is rejected.

7. Discussion

For hypothesis one which measured such predictor variables of gender, age, marital status, religion, qualification, job status and work experience to show the individual and joint relationship which they exercise on the independent variables (individual conflict) it was found that all the other variables except gender had a significant predictor influence on industrial conflict. To establish this finding a regression analysis was used. The main purpose of a regression analysis is to determine the percentage contribution of the predictor variable to the phenomenon of industrial conflict. For instance, gender contributed only two percent (2%), which is insignificant compared with other variables. This result is undoubtedly a reflection of the nature of the sample for the study. Being largely very educated group, all of the sampled respondents are clearly aware of their rights and privileges so much so that the influence of gender becomes very insignificant. Other predictor variables made more significant impact on the dependent variable. Individually, this amounts to sixteen percent (16%) for age, nine percent (9%) for marital status, eight percent (8%) for religion, twenty-two percent (22%) for qualification, fifty five percent (55%) for job designation and finally eleven percent (11%) for length of service. Jointly interpreted, the predictor variables produced a joint contribution (adjusted R^2) of twenty-five percent (25%) detected at F-ratio of 61.04 at .01 level of significance.

The implication of this finding is that though all the predictor variables contributed individually and jointly in varying degrees to the dependent variable, but then there are still some other variables not included in the study which are equally important in industrial conflict.

Although, hypothesis 1 showed the contributing weight of each of the predictor variables, it cannot explain the effect of each or all of the variables on the phenomenon. It is for this reason that hypothesis 2 was generated to show the significant influence of gender, work perception and union membership both individually and in interaction with one or two other variables on the dependent variable. For instance, table 3 reveals that work perception, gender and union membership produced individually an F-ratio of 43.15, 78.80 and 13.97 respectively. All the interaction effects of work perception and gender (F-ratio, 27.17) work perception and union membership (F-ratio, 88.30), gender and union membership (F-ratio, 21.31) and work perception, gender and union membership (F=90.65) produced very significant effects on industrial conflict. The interpretation of this result is that the higher the work perception of individuals or groups, the higher is their disposition to industrial conflict. This is natural in the sense that most people will naturally "fight for or protect what they cherish or hold in high esteem (Moscel, 1986).

Other findings of this study have shown that there is gender inequality in the employment distributions across Nigerian Colleges of Education. Various researchers who have worked in this area of study supported this finding. An instance is a report given by the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) which indicate that female teaching staff were 32% in comparison with the male staff which was 68% (NCHE 1996). This shows what a seemingly minor, educational average can do in a social educational semiotics in which crisis is tolerated in education (Hodges and Kress 1993).

Also the findings of this research work revealed that majority of the staff in the Nigerian Colleges of Education are middle-aged (between 30 and 49 years old). This accounts for their radicalism, perceived high work alienation and continuous militant struggles to claim their rights, which often result in industrial conflicts. This finding corroborates earlier research works which shows that industries draw majority of their employees from economically active population (Isoleye 1970; Mgbe 1991; Adesina 1995, Olufayo 2000). Oni (1987) reported that the Nigerian institution of higher learning today is unattractive to any ambitious young man or woman. According to him, with lack of facilities for work, low pay, and frustration, in the context of rising expectation, the Nigerian University lecturer is a 'cursed specie'.

The result of the investigation on marital status showed that a large majority of the respondents were married but had very small number of children with average of three per home. This relative small family size could be as a result of civilization or a kind of reaction to the economic situation of Nigeria. This research work also revealed that the respondents are highly educated. In the sampled Colleges of education, majority of the staff hold Bachelor degrees. Thus, the educational qualification which Norris (1987) viewed as the first hurdle to high statuses and careers is not actually a major problem confronting the Nigerian educational development.

This study also revealed that there was a significant main effect of gender and work perception on industrial conflict in Nigeria Colleges of Education. Instead of stereotyping women and viewing them as a group with identical life patterns, it would clearly be more equitable to judge women individually. Gradually, designated occupational distributions which presume that certain occupations are for men are breaking down. Nigerian women now hold more positions of leadership or prestige in management than ever before. According to Opeke (2002), more female employees are gradually moving to management and decision-making levels. Although women's participation in the workforce has grown steadily worldwide, existing gender inequalities have increased with respect to pay and working conditions. According to the May 2000 Beijing Platform for Action, women continue to face barriers to economic empowerment and entrepreneurship. These obstacles include discrimination in education, training, hiring, access to credit, the right to own and inherit property, lower levels of pay, and inequality of promotion for equal work, as well as greater domestic responsibilities for women.

In consonance with the findings of this research, many researchers have found positive relationships between education levels, job satisfaction and organizational conflict (Rogers 1991). Falcone (1991) found that educated managers expressed more job satisfaction in both public and private sectors than less educated managers. Awosusi (2004) found out that educational qualification has a significant positive relation with industrial conflict among universities lecturers in south west Nigeria. In a survey conducted in four municipalities in the Midwestern and Southwestern United States, Howard & Frink (1996) found that individuals with greater levels of education would experience more growth opportunities than those individuals who are less educated. In addition, Bilgic (1998)

conducted a study of 249 full-time employees in both public and private sectors in Turkey and found that more educated employees were more satisfied than those less educated.

Also, Awosusi (2004) reported that gender, age, marital status, religion, qualification, job status had significant independent contribution towards industrial conflict among universities lecturers in south west Nigeria.

However, this study revealed that length of service does not have independent significant prediction of industrial conflict. This is contrary to the findings of some authors. For example, Bilgic found out that the number of years spent in an organization is an age-related variable that has a relationship to job satisfaction. It can predict the affective response to work (or the positive feelings toward work). The contribution of this variable to good feelings toward the job is positive (Bilgic 1998). Moreover, demographic variables, such as work experience, age, and positive personal perceptions, enhanced job satisfaction (Howard & Frink 1996). In a study that examined relationships among five domains (stress, strain, coping, job satisfaction and negative affectivity), Decker & Borgen (1993), using a sample of 249 adult men and women employed in full-time positions, found that education, work experience, and age were positively related to job satisfaction and disposition towards conflict or otherwise. In fact, persons with more work experience had respect for their jobs, could apply their experience to that work, and might like the physical work environment (Bilgic 1998).

This study also revealed a significant effect of union membership on industrial conflict. This finding is not supported by the research outcome of Fajana and Adegoke (2009) that the link between union membership, union militancy and industrial conflict is not necessarily a strong one, especially coupled with the fact that the strike is just one form of industrial protests. According to him, in the present time, such unrests are controlled through anti-labour legislation such as the ban or hedging of strikes and deregistration of unions that contravene essential services law for example.

8. Recommendations

Given the findings of this study, the following recommendations were:

It is expedient that the quality of working life of both academic and non academic staff in tertiary institutions be improved upon by way of deliberate government policies of actions aimed at reducing the factors which allow for the feelings of meaninglessness. Employers of labour should make available sufficient fund to provide facilities that will ensure minimum comfort for staff of Colleges of Education in Nigeria.

Given the challenge of the low representation of women in the academia, it is being recommended that female higher education particularly at the tertiary institution level should be encouraged through a combination of

    i. Career guidance and counselling in the secondary schools to prepare girls for higher academic pursuits.

    ii. Empowering women who have just passed out of secondary schools and tertiary institutions with job opportunities.

The machinery for decision making in the tertiary institutions namely the use of committee system should be re-structured to accommodate the participation of non-professional academic and women lecturers.

There should be adequate provision of facilities for research and for academic publications. This will encourage the lecturers to perform better on their schedules, increase their positive job perception and so reduce incidence of industrial conflict.

Each college of education should re-assess its admission policies with a view to ensuring that students enrolments are realistically related to the numerical strength of the lecturers vis-à-vis the College staff-student ratio.

Since the findings revealed that most of the perceived industrial conflict relate with trade union versus Provost, it is being suggested that each Provost should create permanent industrial relations committees on which the various unions will be represented. The

Committee should be meeting regularly and it should serve as a forum on which all issues that could lead to industrial conflict will be raised and resolved as and when due.

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