

Politics and Conflict Management in Manufacturing Organizations and its Implication on National Transformation: a Case of Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Company, Kogi State Nigeria.

Odiba Isaac Abdul, PhD^{1*} Daluba Noah Ekeyi, PhD^{1**} Pauline Ann Baba^{1***} Elizabeth Dajili²

1. Faculty of Education, Kogi State University, Anyigba Nigeria

*Email: drisaacao@yahoo.com

**Email: sirdalus@yahoo.com

***Email: annbaba@gmail.com

2. Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa, Nigeria

Abstract

The study investigated politics and conflict management in manufacturing organizations and its implication on National transformation with particular reference to Ajaokuta Iron and Steel company. Four research questions were articulated and four hypotheses were formulated to guided the study. The study a descriptive survey research design. The population for study was 1800 workers. 1046 workers in the study constitute the sample for the study. The instrument for data collection was a 20-item structured questionnaire captioned management of politics and conflict questionnaire (NAPCA). The instrument was faced and content validated. Using Pearson moment correlation coefficient, a reliability index of 0.81 was obtained. The implications of the study was discussed and various recommendations were made as the incidence of communication gap in the management of the organization should be reduced; seminars and workshop on conflict management staff and experts in conflict management should be invited and resource person to discuss the subject matter intensively.

Keywords: Politics; Conflicts; Management; National and Transformation

Introduction

Conflict and politics in manufacturing organizations are not always discussed in official spheres yet they are words that go to the root and survival of many organizations in the world. The manufacturing organization can be considered as a social system consisting defined boundaries within which individuals interrelate, and interact in the performance of activities and programmes functioning for the attainment of common goals. Parson in Odiba and Aku (2005) posited that a social system is a plurality of individual actors interacting with each other in a situation which has at least a physical environment. This then suggests that a social system is an aggregate of individuals and institutional organization located in an identifiable geographical locality and functioning in different degrees of interdependence as a permanent organized unit of the social order. On the basis of the interaction among the workforce in the organization, conflict is ineviTable.

In a manufacturing company, individual disputes is a global phenomenon. According to Ityodugh(2003) the industrial dispute that occur in any company or organization should be interpreted as a loss of control by the management. Suffice to say that some conflict situations go out of hand and bring individuals or institutions to a complete collapse not as a result of the nature of conflict but the management of the situation to reduce explosion of the matter. Organizational politics and conflicts in modern society have been a constant reality in the history of manufacturing organizations. In the past, such politics and conflicts have caused profound employees suffering resulting in untold challenges. In human history politic and conflicts had always existed which had impacted on the socio-economic and political development of nations, communities and families (Ejeh, 2006).Angela in Ejeh(2006) contended that conflict is ubiquitous and occurs at institutional and individual levels. No meaningful transformation can take place in the face of conflicts and other form of unrest.

Transformation is the dream of any serious minded organization. Transformation is a form of enacted change that is planned and is intended to bring about significant changes in how an institution or organization is managed. Norris in Odiba (2012) posited that, unlike crescive change which is unplanned and take place through natural course of events, transformation is intentionally planned to alter organizational structures and relationships. Transformation can also be taken to mean a process for developing and maintaining a work environment in which everyone can be developed and allowed to contribute fully to the life of the nation and its objectives. National transformation therefore implies a change in all the sectors of the economy as a result of environmental influences, economic, legal, demographic and or technological forces.

Managing conflicts and politics in the manufacturing organization is the major concern of this paper. Manufacturing organization in Nigeria are sited in areas based on factors responsible for locating such industries.

It would be pertinent to investigate the management of this conflict and the extent of impacts on the organization inform of production and improved performance. Ezigbo (2003),Ibor (2004) and Ejeh (2006) had observed that the pedigree of most manufacturing companies in Nigeria are rooted in management problems ,politics and conflicts. It is on the basis of the above background that this intends to examine politics and conflict s management in manufacturing organization and its implication on national transformation a case of Ajaokuta Iron and Steel company.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study is to examine the effects of politics and conflicts management and its implications on national transformation. Specifically, the study sought to;

- 1) Find out the perception of junior and senior staff of the company on politics conflicts management.
- 2) Determine the impact of politics conflicts on the growth and operations Ajaokuta Iron and Steel company.
- 3) Find out the perception of junior and senior staff of the company on the approaches to conflict management and resolution.
- 4) Ascertain the category of workforce involved in politics and conflicts in in the company.

Research Questions

The following research questions and hypotheses were answered and tested respectively.

1. What is the difference between the perception of junior and senior staff of the company on conflicts and politics management ?
2. What impact do politics and conflicts have on the growth and operation of the company?
3. What is the perception of junior and senior staff on the approaches to conflicts management and resolution?
4. What categories of the workforce are mostly involved in politics and conflicts in the company?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the perception of the employees (senior and junior) of Company on the management of conflicts and politics.
2. There is no significant difference in the perception of senior and junior workers on the impact of polices and conflicts on the growth and operation of the company
3. There is no significant difference in the perception of senior and junior workers as per the approaches to conflict management and resolution in the company.
4. There is no significant difference in the perception of senior and junior workers of the category of the workforce that are mostly involved in politics and conflicts.

Research Method

The Study employed a descriptive survey research design. The study area comprised of one thousand eight hundred (1800) workers which form the population of the study. Using stratified sampling technique a total number of one thousand and forty-six (1046) comprising seven hundred and ninety six junior staff (796) and two hundred and fifty senior staff were randomly sampled and used for the study. The questionnaire designated "Management of politics and conflicts questionnaire (MPCQ) was constructed and used to gather data for the study. The instrument had twenty items which was further divided into five sections. The drafted questionnaire was subjected to both face and content validity by two experts in measurement and evaluation from University of Nigeria Nsukka. Section A of the questionnaire was used to collect personal data of the respondents while sections B,C,D and E addressed the four research questions that guided the study. A reliability index of 0.81 was established through the statistical tool of Pearson moment correlation coefficient. A three point rating scale of Agree(A),Undecided(U),and Disagree(D). Frequency counts and simple percentage were used to elicit answers to the research questions while Z-test was used to analyze the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Data Analysis

The data analysis is as presented below;

Research question 1: What is the difference between the perception of junior and senior staff of the company on politics and conflict management?

To provide answer to this question, items 1 to 5 on the questionnaire were considered and analyzed as presented in Table 4:1.

Table 4.1: Perception of the employees on the causes of politics and conflicts in the manufacturing organization

S/N	Description of items	A	%	U	%	D	%
1	The heterogeneity of Ajaokuta Iron and Steel company could be responsible for the series of conflicts and management crises in the organization	1000	95.6	0	-	46	4.4
2	Ineffective communication among the staff and other workers could be responsible for the managements politics and conflicts in the organization	1000	95.6	15	1.4	30	3.0
3	Ethnic interest could be responsible for the series of politics and conflicts in the organization	-	-	10	0.9	1030	98.4
4	Religious difference could stir up politics and conflict in the organization	1030	98.4	-	-	-	-
5	The hostility of the environment could lead to politics and conflicts in the organization	1030	98.4	16	1.6	-	-

Legend: A= Agree; U= Undecided; D= Disagree

Table 4.1 data shows that between 95% to 98.4% of the respondents agreed that ineffective communication, the heterogeneity of the manufacturing organization, ethic interest and the religion of the labour force are responsible for the inability of the company to manage the conflicts and politics in Ajaokuta Iron and Steel company.

Research question 2: What impact has politics and conflicts have impact on the growth and operation of Ajaokuta Iron and Steel company?

Item 1 to 5 on the questionnaire were used to answer this question and the analysis is presented in Table 4.2

Table 4.2: The perception of the employees on the impact of politics and conflicts in the growth and operation of the manufacturing organization.

S/N	Description of items	A	%	U	%	D	%
1	The presence of politics and conflicts in Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Company has made development and progress difficulty in the organization	1044	99.5	-	-	2	0.2
2	The politics and conflicts in the organization affect the performance of Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Company	1006	96.2	0.5	0.5	33	3.3
3	Social and economic progress is absent in Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Company as a result of politics and conflicts	846	80.6	10	0.9	190	18.2
4	The politics and conflicts in Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Company have drastically reduced the productivity of the organization	1000	95.6	-	-	30	3.0
5	Enthusiasm to work by the employers of Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Company has reduced as a result of management conflicts in the organization.	00	00	8	0.8	1038	99.2

Table 4.2 above shows that 80.6% to 96.2% of the respondents agreed that politics and conflicts could hamper the performance of the manufacturing organization. On the other hand, only 0.5% to 3.3% disagreed.

Research question 3: what is the perception of junior and senior staff of the company on the approaches to conflict management and resolution?

Items 1-5 were used to answer the research question and analysis is as provided in Table 4.3. below.

Table 4.3: Responses of junior and senior staff on approaches to conflict management and resolution.

S/N	Description of items	A	%	U	%	D	%
1	Politics and conflicts in Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Company can be managed by negotiation	1045	99.9	-	-	1	0.1
2	Politics and conflicts in Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Company can be managed by arbitration	1043	99.7	-	-	3	0.3
3	Politics and conflicts in Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Company can be managed by eclectic approaches	1020	97.5	-	-	26	2.5
4	Politics and conflicts in Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Company can be managed by intervention of a higher authority	1045	99.9	-	-	1	0.1
5	Politics and conflicts in Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Company can be managed by ignoring it	-	-	-	-	1045	99.9

From Table 4.3 data it can be deduct that 97.5% to 99.9% of the respondents concord that negotiation, arbitration and multi-disciplinary approaches are the main approaches to conflict management and resolution.

Research question 4: What are the categories of the workforce that are mostly involved in politics and conflicts in Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Company?

Items 1 to 5 on the questionnaire guided the analysis for this question. The result is as presented in Table 4.4

Table 4.4: The perception of employees on the category of the workforce that is involved in politics and conflicts.

S/N	Description of items	A	%	U	%	D	%
1	The entire workforce is involved in politics and conflicts in the Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Company	-	-	-	-	1046	100
2	Politics and conflicts are more prevalent among the junior workforce	-	-	-	-	1046	100
3	The senior workforce are more involved in the politics and conflicts in Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Company	1046	100	-	-	-	-
4	Only the management staff are involved in the politics and conflicts in Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Company	1046	100	-	-	-	-
5	Only the Governing Board is involved in politics and conflicts in Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Company	1020	97.5	-	-	26	2.5

Table 4.4 data shows that 100% of the respondents concord that it is the senior staff of the manufacturing organization that is involved in the politics and conflicts.

Hypothesis 1 – Ho: there is no difference in the perception of the employees (senior and junior staff) of Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Company on management of conflicts and politics in the manufacturing organizations

Table 4.5: Z-test on the differences in the perception of junior and senior staff on the management of politics and conflicts in the manufacturing organization.

Group	N	$\sum X^2$	$\sum X$	SS	df	Z-Calculated	Z-Critical	Decision
Junior (X)	796	149000	19	56250000	1044	0.11	1.9660	Not Sig
Senior (Y)	250	4243	17	4529081				

Legend

N = Number of Respondents $\sum X^2$ = Sum of responses $\sum X$ = Mean of groups or variables SS = Sum of Squares df = degrees of freedom (N-2)

Table 4.5: data shows that the value of Z-calculated which is 0.11 is less than the Table value of 1.960 therefore the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the perception of employees (junior and

senior staff) of Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Company on the management of conflicts and politics in manufacturing organization was accepted.

Hypothesis 2- Ho: There is no significant difference between the perception of junior and senior workers on the impact of Politics and conflict on the growth and operation of the Company.

Table 4.6: Z-test on the differences in the perception of junior and senior staff on the impact of politics and conflicts on the growth and operations of the company.

Group	N	X ²	- X	SS	df	Z- Calculated	Z- Critical	Decision
Junior (X)	796	14680	18.44	55130400	1044	0.051	1.960	Not Sig
Senior (Y)	250	4388	17.55	4829384				

Table 4.6 data shows that the value of the Z-calculated which is 0.051 is less than the Table value of 1.960. Therefore the null hypothesis which states that politics and conflicts have impacted on the growth and operation of the organization was accepted.

Hypothesis 3 – Ho3: There is no significant difference in the perception of junior and senior workers as per the approach to conflict management and resolution.

The data collected based on items 1-5 were analyzed and the results is as presented in Table 4.7

Table 4.7: Z-test on the difference in the perception of workers on the approaches to conflict management and resolution in a manufacturing organization

Group	N	X ²	- X	SS	df	Z- Calculated	Z- Critical	Decision
Junior (X)	796	7386	9.3	21732596	1044	0.15	1.960	Not Sig
Senior (Y)	250	1888	7.6	1649792				

Table4.8 shows that the value of Z calculated 0.15 is less than the Z critical value of 1.960. The null hypothesis was therefore accepted.

Hypothesis 4- Ho: There is no significant difference in the perception of junior and senior workers of the company on the category of the workforce that are mostly involved in politics and conflicts.

Table 4.8: Z-test on the difference in perception of workers on the category of workforce involved in politics and conflict.

Group	N	X ²	- X	SS	df	Z- Calculated	Z- Critical	Decision
Junior (X)	796	5686	7	18842596	1044	0.1	1.960	Not Sig
Senior (Y)	250	1546	6	1531456				

Table4.8 shows that the value of Z calculated, 0.1 is less than the value of Z critical. Therefore the null hypothesis was accepted.

Discussion of findings

The discussion of the findings of this study would be done as follows:

Through the study, it was identified that the followings are the problems that hinders the management of politics and conflicts in Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Company. These include ineffective communication between employees and management, the heterogeneity of the manufacturing organization, ethnic interest and religious discrimination. This finding is consistent with those of Oji (1997:4), Ibor (2004: 71) Babawale (2006:9) and Ejeh (2006:3). To these authors, the heterogeneity of manufacturing organization, conflicts, hatred, lack of trust, uncompromising attitudes, and the tense and unreadable struggles for power is unquestionable.

The presence of this problem in any given organization, especially manufacturing organization, plays down the progress and development of the organization. The implication of this is that social and economic progress is undermined in an organization where conflict is sporadic. In fact, no meaningful development can take place in

an atmosphere of insecurity and break down of law and order. Remember that the social, economic and political activities would be paralyzed and sustainable national development would be retarded.

Politics and conflicts could hamper performance in the manufacturing organization. The zeal of men to exert/influence others leads to dictatorship and anarchy. This has impacted seriously on the growth and operations as the attention of management will always be on how to handle the conflicts in existence instead of focusing on the aims and objectives of the organization. One of the findings of this study is that where conflicts and power tussle exist, development and progress would be difficult. This is to say social and economic progress will be absent. Furthermore, conflict and politics reduce performance and productivity in the manufacturing organization.

Generally, conflict and development function at opposite direction in any given organization. Conflict and politics most often degenerate into political vendettas which sometimes leads to killings and reductions of members of staff in the manufacturing organization. The finding is consistent with the conclusion of Ejeh (2006:3) where she contended that incidents of hostilities in different parts of the country have shaken the very foundation and hitherto peaceful disposition of the organization.

It was one of the findings of this study that the approach to conflict management and resolution in the manufacturing organization includes negotiation, arbitration and multi-disciplinary approaches, this therefore presupposes that there are several strategies that organizations use to resolve conflicts. Again this finding is consistent with the views of Ibor (2004:71) that a vast level of strategies and techniques for managing and resolving conflicts in any given organization exist. The author further postulates that these strategies include negotiation, arbitrations, peer pressure, supernatural sanctions, gossip, ostracism, violence and multidisciplinary methods.

All manufacturing organizations have their methods of handling conflicts. These mechanisms may be formal or informal, violent or peaceful. The entire scenario borders on the fact that the industrial relations system is considered as being concerned with work relationship in establishment.

The research observed that the senior members of staff of the manufacturing organizations are mostly involved in politics and conflicts as a result of their selfish desire of who is in power to control and direct, the religion of the head and from which tribe. They fail to realize that any company established by the federal government is to be enjoyed by all citizens of the country and not specifically for the people of the immediate environment where it is located.

Implication of the study

From the results of the study conflicts and politics exist, most especially among senior staff members of the Ajaokuta Iron and steel company. This led to instability and non-functionality of the establishment. The resultant effect of this also goes into tampering with the turnover of the company and wastage on the part of the federal government resources. The incessant conflicts and politics led to the closure of the company unemployment problems. Destruction of the company's tools/properties and other infrastructural facilities enumerate from vices by the employees. It therefore, means that effective management of these conflicts and politics among the employees in this company will go a long way in sustaining and maintain peace which will facilitate effective productivity and turnover to the company, Kogi State and Nigeria in general.

Conclusion

The following conclusion can be deduced from this study.

1. Ineffective communication between the employees and the management, the heterogeneity of the manufacturing organization ethnic interests and religion of the work force have been identified as the major problems in the management of conflicts in Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Company.
2. Politics and conflicts have impacted on the growth and operation of Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Company.
3. Approach to conflict management and resolutions are negotiation, arbitration and multi-disciplinary approaches
4. The senior staffs of Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Company are responsible for the politics and conflicts in the organization.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations of this study:

1. The management of the manufacturing organizations should reduce the incidence of communication gap in the management of their organization. Communication is the life-blood of any organization. Communication aids improved performance in any organization and so should be fully developed.
2. Seminars and workshops on conflict management should be organized regularly for the management staff. Experts in conflict management should be invited to discuss the subject matter intensively.

References

- Babawale, I. (2006).The growth of conflicts in Organizations: An overview. *Ankpa Journal of Arts and Social Sciences* 4(2) 9-11.
- Ejeh, A. C. (2006).Conflict Management and Resolution: A recipe for National Development. *Teacher Education Journal* 3(2) 23-27.
- Ezigbo, C. A. (2003). *Advanced management theory*. Enugu; Immaculate publication ltd.
- Ibor, O. (2004). Natural Resources Management: Conflicts and Resolutions. *Journal of the Ministry of Finance* 4(1) 100-105.
- Ityodugh, B. (2003). *Politics in organizations*. Jos; Ekin Publications.
- Odiba, A. I. & Aku, C. A. (2005).*Understanding classroom management*. Ankpa; Marble Creation
- Odiba, A.I. (2012). Educational quality improvement in Nigeria: interventions, challenges and the way forward. *Journal of Research in Education and Society*. 3(2) 53-59.
- Oji, A. C. (1997). *Organizational politics*. Benin; Agape Publishers.

This academic article was published by The International Institute for Science, Technology and Education (IISTE). The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open Access Publishing service based in the U.S. and Europe. The aim of the institute is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the publisher can be found in the IISTE's homepage:

<http://www.iiste.org>

CALL FOR PAPERS

The IISTE is currently hosting more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals and collaborating with academic institutions around the world. There's no deadline for submission. **Prospective authors of IISTE journals can find the submission instruction on the following page:** <http://www.iiste.org/Journals/>

The IISTE editorial team promises to review and publish all the qualified submissions in a **fast** manner. All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Printed version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

