

Managing The Collective Bargaining Option For Conflict Resolution In Chevron Nigeria Limited: An Ecological Approach

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ABSTRACT

The study examined collective bargaining option for conflict resolution in Chevron Nigeria Limited. The data utilized were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. The study revealed among others the understanding by the management of Chevron Nigeria Limited of the collective bargaining option as a magic-cure for resolution of conflicts with the various unions and there is poor level of commitment to the implementation of the collective agreements by management of the company. The study recommended the exigency of proper management of the reward system in Chevron Nigeria Limited in order to avoid huge differentials among different categories of employees.

Key Words: Collective Bargaining, Conflict-Resolution, Chevron, Nigeria.

Background to the Study

Globally, conflict has become a feature of societies, organizations and sundry groups. This recognition may not be unconnected with the reasoning that in any group setting including organizations, there exist varying and conflicting interests among members. The absence of a monolithic interest among individuals is therefore a plausible explanation for the inevitability of conflicts within groups, organizations and societies. It is therefore instructive to note that beyond the recognition that conflicts exist in organizational contexts or environments, is the primacy of developing and applying the appropriate strategies and tools for managing conflicts. This is especially because organizational harmony is not synonymous with the absence of conflict. The above reasoning underscores the importance of collective bargaining in conflict resolution. Arguably, collective bargaining is a necessary tool for resolving conflicts in organizations. All the same, the collective bargaining option is not a sufficient condition for industrial harmony. This position explains the exigency of genuine realization of the value and potential benefits of the above option and the need to be committed to the implementation of collective agreements.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the utilitarian value of collective bargaining as highlighted in peace and conflict management studies (Mamoria et al 2012, Ratnam 2013 & Bean 2015), conflicts including strikes have remained common place. At the heart of the poor efficacy of the collective bargaining instrument for conflict resolution in organizations, is the near absence of an ecological approach to the management of the collective bargaining option largely due to the wrong perception of the option as a magic cure for organizational conflicts. This study therefore examines the efficacy of the ecological approach to the management of the collective bargaining instrument for the resolution of conflicts between management and contract workers in Chevron Nigeria Limited.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

- i. Examine the impact of the poor understanding of the collective bargaining option as magic cure for organizational conflicts on conflict management in Chevron Nigeria Limited.
- ii. Investigate the relevance of the ecological approach to the management of the collective bargaining option for effective

conflicts resolution in Chevron Nigeria Limited.

- iii. Assess the commitment of the management of Chevron Nigeria Limited to collective bargaining with the umbrella union of contract workers in the organization.
- iv. Make valuable recommendations for an efficacious management of the collective bargaining system and practice through an ecological approach.

Research Questions

- i. Is there any relationship between the poor understanding of the collective bargaining option as magic cure for organizational conflicts and conflict management in Chevron Nigeria Limited?
- ii. Is there any relationship between the ecological approach to the management of the collective bargaining option and effective conflict resolution in Chevron Nigeria Limited?
- iii. Is there any relationship between the commitment of the management of Chevron Nigeria Limited to the collective bargaining option and effective conflict resolution in the Organization?

Review of Relevant Literature and Theoretical Framework

Conflict: A Conceptual Clarification

According to Kornhauser et al (2012), conflict is the total range of behavior and attitudes that express opposition and divergent orientations between individual owners and managers on the one hand and working people and their organizations. The commonsense view of conflict is that of a process that is disruptive and destructive and a similar assumption predominates among Sociologists also. In fact, Sociological orthodoxy has something of a fixation about 'order' and it tends to treat any threat to the stability of the status quo as a problem to be both deplored and if possible eliminated (Hyman, 2009). Another sociological tradition, very much in minority, has tended to define the status quo as the 'problem' and to welcome conflict as a possible precursor of an alternative form of social order. There is yet a third and an increasingly influential approach, which insists that paradoxically, the expression of conflict can act as a means of reinforcing the status quo. It should therefore be stated, at the onset, that conflict is indicative of an adversarial relationship between management and employees. However, if

conflict is institutionalized, it helps to create a peaceful industrial relations climate in the work place. This explains why industrial peace does not mean absence of conflict. Although conflict is an element in the maintenance of peace and equilibrium in the industrial relations system, there is a point beyond which conflict can take both positive and negative forms. Conflicts in its positive form can bring about improvement in the working conditions of staff, while negative form of conflict becomes destructive and undesirable.

Besides, the conflict universe encompasses both collective and individual responses, including not only strikes (concerted, temporary cessations of work) but sabotage, work slowdowns and boycotts as well as individual actions such as absenteeism and quitting (Bean, 2015). The possibility of conflict exists among members of the widest variety of potentially co-operative, but frequently antagonistic interest groups working in contemporary organizations. Each episode of conflict may represent a limited trial of strength intended to preserve or, more usually, to modify the industrial status quo, that is, to bring about some changes in the rules that regulate the relationships of the parties concerned. Conflicts are endemic to industrial societies. In the face of the strength and advantage of labour-management cooperation, the interests of both parties usually seem to be opposed and conflicting. Conflicts may either be sustained and organized or sporadic and unorganized (Ratnam, 2013). They may manifest themselves in the form of a strike or a go-slow, which are essentially calculated attempts to apply pressure so as to alter the situation. It should therefore be stated, at the onset, that conflict is indicative of an adversarial relationship between management and employees. However, if conflict is institutionalized, it helps to create a peaceful industrial relations climate in the work place. This explains why industrial peace does not mean absence of conflict.

Causes of Conflicts

Although a multitude of causes lead to conflicts, it is not always easy, in specific instances, to ascertain the particular cause or causes involved. The surface manifestations of unrest and dissatisfaction that appear to be responsible for work stoppage may cover deep-seated and more basic causes that cannot be observed at first sight. Moreover, the relative importance of the causes, when more than one is present, is often very difficult to evaluate (Mamoria et al 2012). However, it has been pointed out by industrial relations experts that the causes of conflicts between labour and management are usually the same, wherever capitalist economy

prevails. In this context, the development of capitalistic enterprise, which means the control of the tools of production by a small entrepreneurial class, has brought to the fore the acute problem of friction between management and labour throughout the world (Mamoria et al 2012 citing Mukerjee). When people sell their services and spend their working lives on the premises of the purchaser of those services, a varying amount of dissatisfaction, discontent and industrial unrest are likely to occur (Mamoria et al 2012). The employees are especially interested in higher wages, healthy working conditions, opportunity to advance and satisfying work. When such things are denied to them (because employers cut down their expenditure on labour to inflate their profits), they are forced to exert their rights and stop working to make the employers understand their grievances and redress them. Industrial relations may be harmonious or strained and acrimonious. In the latter case, there may be many causes that are rooted in historical, political and socio-economic factors, and in the attitudes of workers and their employers. These causes of industrial disputes therefore include the following (Mamoria et al 2012).

Industry-Related Factors: Under this category, some of the causes of a dispute may be the industry-related factors pertaining to employment, work, wages, hours of work, privileges, the rights and obligations of employees and employers, terms and conditions of employment, including matters pertaining to dismissal or non-employment of any person, registered agreement, settlement or award; and demarcation of the function of an employee.

Management-Related Factors: The management-related factors that lead to conflict include management's unwilling to talk over any dispute with the employees or their representatives or refer it to "arbitration" even when trade unions want it to do so enrages the workers. The management's unwillingness to recognize a particular trade union and the dilatory tactics to which it resorts while verifying the representative character of any trade union is also a very fruitful source of industrial strife. Even when employers have recognized the representative trade unions, they do not in a number of cases; delegate enough authority to their officials to negotiate with their workers, even though the representatives of labour are willing to commit themselves to a particular settlement. Again, whenever, during negotiations for the settlement of a dispute, the representatives of employers unnecessarily and unjustifiably take the side of the management, tensions are created, which often lead to strikes, go-slow or lockouts. The management's insistence that it is solely responsible for recruitment,

promotion, transfer, merit awards, etc and there is no need to consult employees in regards to any of these matters equally annoys workers who in turn become un-co-operative and unhelpful and often resort to strikes.

Government-Related Factors: The various government-related factors that breed conflict include the changes in economic policies that create many dispute situations. Though there exists a plethora of enactments for the promotion of harmonious industrial relations, yet their ineffective or unsatisfactory working engenders conflicts. Most of the labour laws may have lost their relevance in the context of the changing industrial relations climate/culture.

Collective Bargaining: A Conceptual Understanding

Collective bargaining is treaty-making and treaty-enforcing process undertaken by the chosen representatives of management and labour (Damachi, 2008). In the view of Adeogun (2017), collective bargaining is a term applied to those arrangements under which wages and conditions of employment are settled by a bargain in the form of an agreement made between employers or association of employers and workers organizations. This definition by Adeogun focuses on agreement, which is thus the product of the process and which is not only termed collective agreement, but normally covers a great variety of matters such as rates of wages, hours of work, holiday, sick pay, overtime conditions, employment of apprentices, redundancy and procedure for settlement of grievances.

Besides, collective bargaining can also be seen in effect as meaning sharing this power with which management is invested to enable it to carry out its wide responsibilities with trade unions or representatives of employees who are entrusted with the same responsibilities (Webs, 2013). According to Imoisili (2008), Labour decree No. 21 of 1974, as amended in 1978 defines collective bargaining as “the process of arriving or attempting to arrive at a collective agreement. However, the “modern conception of collective bargaining is much wider than as stated above. Yesufu (2014) also posits that collective bargaining includes all methods by which groups of workers and the relevant employers come together to attempt to reach agreement in matters under discussion by a process of negotiation. Such matters are often regarded as constituting a challenge, which generates a relationship of competitive rivalry, and the usual method of reaching a decision is that of compromise and

authority, tends to be derived from the relative strength of the parties involved.

Federal Ministry of Employment Labour and Productivity defines collective bargaining in the traditional sense as negotiations about working conditions and terms of employment between an employer, a group of employers and one or more employers' organizations on the one hand and one or more representative workers' organizations on the other with a view to reaching agreement (Ubeku, 1983). Imoisili (2008) equally opines that collective bargaining is a process as well as a philosophy of agreeing on the terms and conditions of service between an employer (or group of employers) and his workers (or their union). The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2012) describes collective bargaining as “voluntary negotiation between employers or employers' organizations and workers' organizations with a view to regulating terms and conditions of employment by collective agreements. Chamberlain & Kuhn (2011), contends that collective bargaining is a means of contracting for the sale of labour, a form of industrial government and method of management, while Fashoyin (2000) views collective bargaining as a form of industrial jurisprudence in the work place where rules are jointly made by the employees and the employers or their representatives. Whitehead (2007) postulates that collective bargaining is a means of creating industrial peace. He identifies three aspects of collective bargaining: first, is joint control, which is often the likely cause of disputes, the second refers to procedures, which provides for resolution of disputes without a recourse to industrial action and thirdly, that sanctions can be applied if negotiation breaks down. Igun and Okumagba (2003) maintains that collective bargaining can be said to mean essentially a compromise and balancing of opposing pressure of two social groups who have enough mutual interests and aims to reach an acceptable agreement. Harbison & Coleman (2001) contends that collective bargaining is a process of accommodation between two institutions, which have both common conflict of interest, while Hyman (2005) see collective bargaining as a study concerning processes of control over work relations.

In sum, collective bargaining involves negotiation about working conditions and terms of employment of people who are affected by employer-employee relationship. It may deal with (a) the employment or non-employment of certain persons (b) conditions of labour which denotes the various physical conditions under which people work in wage employment which is found to be more regulated by law than collective bargaining matters like safety, health and welfare

have been considered to be more appropriate subjects for government regulation, and the need to protect physical well being of employees at least against the worst hazard of industrial employment, has been recognized for a long time. However, conditions of labour have also been the subject of negotiations and sometimes of formal collective agreement.

Collective Bargaining in Chevron Nigeria Limited

In Chevron Nigeria Limited (CNL), there is a collective agreement between CNL and the contract companies. Existing collective agreements are usually entered into by representatives of the management of Chevron Nigeria Limited and representatives of the unions (National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers and PENGANSSAN). The collective bargaining system in CNL is therefore based on collective agreements that are reviewable every two years and they are usually the product of bargaining between the parties to the agreement [the company and the union] in a free and voluntary association in the interest of good and harmonious relations to determine and regulate the conditions of employment of the companies' employees.

The representatives of management of CNL and those of the unions usually meet under the umbrella of the Joint Negotiation Committee (JNC). Negotiations and collective agreements normally cover basic salary, transport allowance, feeding allowance, rent allowance, electricity allowance and feeding allowance usually referred to as gross pay. The company recognizes the union as the sole collective bargaining agent in respect of salaries, wages and other conditions of employment of those of the company's employees who are members of the union and are covered by collective agreements. The company agrees to negotiate with only the union on behalf of such employees who are members of the union and this shall however, not be in derogation of the provisions of the Trade Union Act of 1973 and its amendments.

All collective agreements have tenure of two years. A month to the expiration of each existing collective agreement, the union is expected to communicate to the management of Chevron Nigeria Limited indicating its intention and readiness to enter into a new agreement. The management on the other hand, is expected to inform the union of its willingness to renegotiate the existing collective agreement after it has adequately and duly studied the proposal from the union. Management is also expected to communicate to the union a favourable date

including time and venue. During the renegotiation process, both parties (management and the union) are expected to deliberate on the proposal from the union and arrive at a consensus after some compromises. Whatever is eventually agreed to by both parties is considered as representative of the genuine interest of all stakeholders (CNL, 2014). Under the collective bargaining system of CNL, the management recognizes the right of the union to nominate its member to attend trade union meetings, conferences and seminars and such delegates shall be granted permission with full pay by the management upon the receipt of a request from the National or Zonal secretariat. Request other than for emergency meetings, shall however be submitted in writing to the management at least one week in advance to allow for operational planning. The management will provide assistance and co-operation to the union on such occasions. Notwithstanding the provision above, the union shall be represented at all management – union collective bargaining meetings by 10(ten) persons drawn from NUPENG and PENGANSSAN. Management shall in all such cases bear the cost of passage and board of the union team. At JCC meetings, which shall take place at company level, the union shall be represented by six (6) union representatives of the respective contract companies.

Collective Bargaining for Conflict Resolution in Chevron Nigeria Limited

The company and the union accept the principles of collective bargaining for the determination of salaries and other conditions of employment. Similarly, the company agrees that the union shall have the right to exercise its functions as set out in collective agreements and manage its own affairs without interference from the company. All cases of payments, benefits and other conditions of service are determined by the provisions of collective agreements. The principle of “No Work, No Pay” is affirmed and upheld with regard to stoppages of work and the union agrees that its member shall co-operate with the company in carrying its legitimate functions and instructions in the event of a disagreement, both sides meet in order to resolve the issue in accordance with the grievance procedure as contained in clause 16 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement. In joint recognition by the company and the union, it is understood that there will be no victimization or intimidation of any employee or any union official by the company because of his trade union activities.

The Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) which will meet at company level on quarterly basis as follows: January to March (1st quarter), April to June (2nd quarter), July to September (3rd quarter), and October to December (4th quarter) respectively under the

chairmanship of management representative. A week's notice shall be given either party to hold the meeting.

In the event that the union changes its name or registers with the Register of Trade unions under another name during the term of this agreement, the union undertakes that this agreement will continue to apply to, and remain binding upon, the union during the said term. In a similar vein, in the event that the company changes its name or legal designation during the term of any collective agreement, the company undertakes that the agreement shall continue to apply to, and remain binding upon the company during the said term. In the event that the competent Government of the federal Republic of Nigeria by legislation or other measures provides for benefits, including increases in wages, both the union and the management shall meet to negotiate.

The management shall make appropriate deductions from the wages or salaries of members of the union and remit any sum so deducted directly to the registered office of the union, provided that a strike by the union shall relieve the management of the obligation to make check-off deductions, in accordance with section 16A (b) of the Trade unions (Amendment) Decree no.1 of 1999. In the event of trade dispute, both parties shall endeavour quickly to normalize relations without resort to stoppage or disruption of normal flow of work in keeping with the provision of the current Act on trade disputes in the country. Either party to a contract of employment may terminate the contract on the expiration of notice given by him to the other party of his intention to do so or by payment of money in-lieu of notice. The Joint Action Committee (JAC) in CNL that is made up of twelve representatives each of the management of Chevron Nigeria Limited and the union is responsible for assess the extent of implementation of collective agreements and labour laws is the most effective social institution of industrial democracy and as a statutory body, established within industrial units with representatives of the management and workmen for preventing, and settling industrial disputes. Its objectives are to: remove the causes of friction in the day-to-day work situation by providing an effective grievance-resolving machinery, promote measures aimed at securing unity and good relationship, serve as a useful adjunct in establishing continuing bargaining relationship and strengthen the spirit of voluntary settlement, rendering recourse to conciliation, arbitration and adjudication rather in frequent.

The above joint committees are supposed to give labour a greater sense of participation and infuse a spirit of co-operation between the two parties without encroaching upon each other's sphere of influence, rights and prerogatives. They are also supposedly established as a channel of close mutual interaction between labour and management which, by keeping tension at a low level, generates a co-operative atmosphere for negotiation and settlement. All the same, while such committees try to promote industrial goodwill and harmonious relations through better understanding of employees by management and of management by workers, the twin problem are the magic-cure mentality of the management of CNL in respect of the collective bargaining instrument and poor commitment to collective agreements are permanent sources of conflict culminating in strike actions by unions on a yearly basis, particularly in the last seven years.

The Ecological Approach to Conflict Resolution

Ecology or climate, whether in organizations, governmental administration or society at large connotes personality (Aldag & Brief 2010; Robinson 1990). It is a set of characteristics which are relative enduring over time, typifying an organization and distinguishing it from other organizations (Knowles 1982; Forehand and Gilmer 1962; Hellriegel and Slocum, 1974). Such a set of characteristics create a distinctive ecology or climate and it has the tendency or potency of influencing the attitude of its members including individuals, organizations and societies (Pritchard and Karasick, 2013). Ecology or climate which is a commonly experienced but abstract phenomenon and often referred to by many expressions such as atmosphere, environment, milieu and culture, is a relatively enduring quality of the internal environment that is felt by its members, influences their behaviour and can be described in terms of the values of a particular set of characteristics of the organization, society and the like (Taguiru, 2010). It can also be viewed as a global expression of what an organization or a society is (Schneider & Snyder, 2015). Ecology or climate which can equally be conceptualized as the study of how an organization, or society or any social system relate or interface with its environment (Webb 1996, 436) consists of multiple or diverse dimensions (Campbell et al, 2009).

Some ecologies or climates can be described as considerable, warm and supportive, while others are indifferent, cold, hostile, and competitive (Aldag & Brief, 2010). The supportive and warm climate is the type that encourages and protects the individual's sense of personal worth and importance, while an unsupportive and cold type is the defensive and

manipulative one (Gibb, 2001). In every organization or society certain factors or elements exert profound influence on the existing ecology or climate that is created or constructed whether by design or accidental (Rao & Narayana, 2014). James & Jones (2007), for instance, identified five factors that influence climatic creation or construction viz: context, structure, process, environment and system values and norms. Climate, whether supportive or hostile, is critical to the legal/constitutional, institutional and operational dimensions and it can be changed, recreated or reconstructed (Gordon & Goldberg 2016 and McClelland & Burnham, 2017).

Ecology is a term that is used to describe the relationship between any environment or climate and its envired system (Ezeani, 2006). The influence of different ecologies or environments (with their multiple dimensions viz: social, political, economic, cultural) on institutions and organizations succinctly explain the importance of the ecological approach.

The ecological approach was an attempt to relate public administration to its environment. In other words, it focuses attention on the dynamic relationship between a public administration system and its total environment: physical, cultural, historical, economic and political (Adamolekun, 2016). Every public administration system is influenced by its environment. Thus, a particular institution or administrative system and practices that function very well in one environment might perform poorly in a different environment. That is why Riggs (2001) noted that the significance of each (administrative) pattern lies in its setting. Although Riggs (2001) popularized the ecological approach, the importance of environmental factors in public administration systems has long been recognized by scholars like (Gaus, 2007). It therefore follows that the environment, climate or ecology of anything, may be, Chevron Nigeria Limited, sets parameters which must be viewed as constraints that limit what can be achieved and, concurrently, as resources or strengths that may be utilized by decision makers. These parameters or dimensions are very impinging in that they either constrain or enhance the policies, activities and operations that are germane for the smooth functioning of all social systems like institutions, organizations and societies. The concern in respect of the influence of the ecology or climate on institutions and organizations explains the importance of an ecological approach to the management of the collective bargaining option for conflict resolution in Chevron Nigeria Limited.

It is thus instructive to note that administrators

should take cognizance of their environments in the decision-making process. The need for administrators to comprehend the nature of and take account of the changing environment which exerts influence of various types, both beneficial that are to be utilized and detrimental that should be counteracted (Croft, 2013) is also indubitable. In the context of the above, the ecology or climate of Chevron Nigeria Limited in respect of the differentiated salary and other conditions of service between payroll or mainstream and contract staff as well as the perception of and commitment to collective bargaining and agreements.

Theoretical Framework

For purpose of this study, the social exchange theoretical perspective was adopted. The choice of both perspectives was dictated primarily by its utilitarian value in understanding organizations as a social system comprising different groups and explaining the inevitability of exchange and reciprocal behavior in a social process. Blau (2014) considers exchange to be a social process of central significance rooted in “primitive psychological process” and from it many complex phenomena are derived. The theory deals with social process not merely as a matter of rewards and cost, but as a matter of reciprocal behaviour of different degrees of reciprocity, unequal power, and the social conditions for interpersonal behaviour-as complementary in some situations, competitive in others and, in yet others, altruistic. Social exchange theory is based on a central premise: that the exchange of social and material resources is the fundamental form of human interaction. The key tenet of social exchange theory is that human behaviour is in essence an exchange particularly of rewards (Homans, 2016). The task of social exchange theory is to investigate the reciprocal (mainly material) advantages that individuals draw from their exchange transactions on the premise that they engage in and sustain most social, including non-economic, relations in the rational expectations of such advantages independently of normative or group considerations. In fact, exchange theory in sociological and management studies the mutual gratifications persons provide one another that sustain social relations.

The exchange theory has developed in certain directions and, more than this, it is a changing entity in the mid-flow of discussion between its exponents and critics (Chadwick-Jones, 2006). Beginning mainly as an American product, the exchange theory now has its European contributors. It has become the object of a critique maintained over the years and more recently represented by French authors. Chadwick-Jones (2006) writing on the conditions of exchange, posits that Blau discusses the degree of commitment of

parties to an exchange. The one with fewer alternatives will have the greater commitment and this is a situation again resembling a mixed game. In a mixed game there are common as well as conflicting interests between the advantages of the common partnership and the conflicting consideration of who makes the greater commitment because the person who “shows his hand” will be the more dependent and, therefore, the more vulnerable of the two (Chadwick-Jones, 2006).

As used by Gouldner (2006) and Blau (2014) reciprocity refers to the mutual reinforcement by the two parties of each other's action. This type of exchange involves only two parties. Besides, reciprocity connotes that each party has rights and duties and there can be stable patterns of reciprocity quo exchange only in so far as each party has both rights and duties (Goulder 1960). Ekeh (2014) opines that the principle of exchange operates on the basis of equality between all those involved in the circle of reciprocity. That is to say, exchange theory presupposes a state of equilibrium. Social exploitation leads to situations in which there are certain normative expectations as regards equality or inequality of those involved in an interaction. Social exchange theory offers an advantage in encouraging a diversity of methods and evidence of different kinds such as the socio-metric analysis of interpersonal choice attitude scales, performance in laboratory tasks and in experimental games, and observation and recording of communication in actual situations of occupational behaviour, friendship, and family relations.

All the same, one great weakness in “exchange theory”, according to Cohen (2010), is the tautological use of its explanations so that any interaction can be treated as an exchange. According to Chadwick-Jones, (2006), a frequent criticism of exchange theory is that it is based on an economic model, as if this involves a strictly economic qua materialistic interpretation. Chadwick-Jones, (2006) opines that the restriction of the theory to explaining social relations as an exchange of certain rewards - approval, liking, or conformity - emanates from a methodological constraint.

Research Methods

This study adopted a qualitative case study method. This research method, according to Yin (2003), has three aspects viz: investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, the existence of boundaries between the phenomenon and the real life context and the use of multiple sources of evidence. The qualitative case study method also lends itself to exploratory, descriptive

and explanatory methods. This study which examines the efficacy of the ecological approach to the management of the collective bargaining instrument for conflict resolution in Chevron Nigeria Limited utilized both primary and secondary sources of data.

Both primary and secondary sources of data were utilized in this study. While primary data were obtained from focus group discussion, the secondary data were derived from content analysis of relevant textbooks, journals and corporate documents. In respect of the primary data, three discussion sessions were conducted with three different groups made up of six (6) participants each. The first group was made up of six (6) management staff drawn from public affairs, human resources and production departments of Chevron Nigeria Limited; the second group was made up of six (6) contract staff drawn from the current presidents of six (6) affiliate unions in charge of six (6) contract firms (Oasis Corporate Systems Limited, Ozma Nigeria Company Limited, Avidor Nigeria Limited, Purview Investment Limited, Elper Nigeria Limited, Linkso Nigeria Limited and the third group was comprised of six (6) contract staff who are currently serving presidents of another six affiliate unions in charge of six other contract firms (Benkline Nigeria Limited, Midis Energy Services Limited , Grafen Integrated Oil Field Services Limited, Fajudan Nigeria Limited, Tonba Services Limited and Davton Energy Services Limited). On the whole, there are eighteen (18) affiliate unions in charge of the existing eighteen (18) contract firms in Chevron Nigeria Limited.

Method of Data Analysis

Analyzing focus group discussions involve firstly revisiting your aims and objectives and looking through the detailed notes or a full transcript if you have had the time to produce one. The analysis is aimed at identifying key themes and points of consensus or disagreement as well as noting useful quotations which reflect the purposes of your research (Woods, 2012). In this study, all the notes taken at the focus group discussion sessions were read and transcribed. The transcribed versions of the focus group sessions were compared with the notes taken during FGD sessions to fill the identified gaps. The consensus in the opinions and the commonality in the ideas expressed and presented during the focus group discussion sessions constituted the basis for answering the research questions raised in this study. This process was supported with the qualitative data generated in the study through in-depth content analysis of cognate text books and journals (Richard, 2012) premised on the thematic discourse: Managing the Collective Bargaining Option for Conflict Resolution in Chevron Nigeria Limited: An

Ecological Approach.

Data Presentation

From the data obtained during the focus group discussion sessions with two union groups made up of six (6) executive presidents each (all contact employees of Chevron Nigeria Limited- CNL), there was convergence of opinions suggesting that the management of CNL perceives the collective bargaining option as a magic that can cure all disputes between it and the union leaders as well as their teeming members. As a result of this perception, the two union groups asserted that the management of CNL is poorly committed to agreements reached between it (management) and the affiliated unions of both the Nigerian Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) and the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN) in the company.

The discussion sessions with the two union groups revealed that while the collective bargaining arrangement of alternate years is timely and favourable to the eighteen (18) affiliated unions, the management of Chevron Nigeria Limited sees the time elements of the arrangement as unfavourable largely because every collective bargaining year is an opportunity for the unions to make multiple demands.

The twin problem of the magic-cure mentality of the management of CNL in respect of the collective bargaining instrument and poor commitment to collective agreements are, in the views of the two focus groups of union leaders, are permanent sources of conflict culminating in strike actions by unions on a yearly basis, particularly in the last seven years. The two focus group discussion sessions with the union leaders also indicated that the high level of insensibility to the salary disparity and differentials in condition of service between main-stream (pay-roll) and contract employees of Chevron Nigeria Limited. The discussants, in fact, stressed emphatically that apart from the fact that the monthly salary of the highest paid contract staff is three hundred and seventy thousand naira (N370,000) and that of the least paid main-stream staff is nine hundred thousand naira (N900,000), main-stream staff are entitled to sundry benefits including yearly safety bonus, yearly turkey ticket, yearly fuel allowance, yearly profit sharing, yearly rent allowance, furniture allowance every four years and house ownership scheme (HOS) every five years.

The failure by the management of Chevron Nigeria

Limited to manage the environmental or ecological imbalance in respect of salaries and other benefits for main-stream and contract employees through constant environmental scanning in order to be able to reduce the existing gap between the main-stream and contract staff and minimize the occurrence of conflict including strikes, the two discussion groups of union leaders stressed, is another source of conflict between the management of Chevron Nigeria Limited and the affiliated unions. The focus group discussion with management staff of Chevron Nigeria Limited, on the other hand, showed that there have cases of breach in the implementation of collective agreements between management and the affiliate unions in Chevron Nigeria Limited. They were of the view that while management needs to be more committed to the welfare of the contract workers and be concerned about their demands, the workers should be considerate in making their demands. They equally accepted that the level of differential in the salaries between main-stream and contract staff is evidently high and a source of concern to the contract staff.

Data Analysis

The central aim and objective of the focus group discussions was to identify the key areas of consensus or disagreement among the discussants. The outcome of the three focus group discussions on different aspects of the central theme "the efficacy of the ecological approach to the management of the collective bargaining instrument for the resolution of conflicts between management and contract workers in Chevron Nigeria Limited," shows that the management of Chevron Nigeria Limited sees the collective bargaining option as a magic-cure for conflict resolution in the organization. All the focus group discussants also agreed that there is a poor level of commitment by the management of Chevron Nigeria Limited (CNL) to the implementation of collective agreements between the management of CNL and the affiliated unions. In a similar vein, there was convergence of opinion by the discussants that the existing wide gap in the salaries and other benefits between the main-stream and contract employees is a source of conflict in the organization.

In sum, the consensus in the opinions and the commonality in the ideas expressed and presented during the focus group discussion sessions constituted the basis for answering the research questions raised in this study. This process corroborated and modestly re-enforced the qualitative data generated in the study through in-depth content analysis of cognate text books and journals premised on the thematic discourse "the efficacy of the ecological approach to the management of the collective bargaining instrument for the resolution of

conflicts between management and contract workers in Chevron Nigeria Limited.” Consequent upon the data presented and analyzed above, the three research questions in this study- Is there any relationship between the poor understanding of the collective bargaining option as magic-cure for organizational conflicts and conflict management in Chevron Nigeria Limited, is there any relationship between the ecological approach to the management of the collective bargaining option and effective conflict resolution in Chevron Nigeria Limited and is there any relationship between the commitment of the management of Chevron Nigeria Limited to the collective bargaining option and effective conflict resolution in the Organization are significantly sustained and accepted.

Summary of Findings

This study came up with some valuable findings. Such findings became possible through the use of selective utilization of focus group discussions and in-depth library and documentary sources of information. First and foremost, the study revealed the understanding by the management of Chevron Nigeria Limited (CNL) of the collective bargaining option as a magic cure for the resolution of conflicts with the various affiliated unions in the organization. The study also revealed that the poor level of commitment to the implementation of the collective agreements by management of Chevron Nigeria Limited. The study further showed that the wide gap in the salaries and other benefits between the main-stream and contract employees is a major source of conflict between the management of CNL and the different affiliated unions and a reflection of the insensitivity of the management to the gross ecological imbalance in the reward system of the organization.

Conclusion

In both public and private sector organizations, conflicts are inevitable. As a consequence, conflict resolution methods have become essential and critical to industrial peace and organizational functionality. In the face of the utilitarian value of the collective bargaining option in the management of the organizational conflicts, however, there appears to be a magic-cure mentality of the workability the option. This mentality, a product of poor management, seems to be constraining the potential effectiveness of the collective bargaining instrument for conflict resolution. It is therefore instructive to assert that, beyond the importance of collective bargaining in conflict resolution is the exigency for appropriate management of the collective bargaining instrument and ecological approach to the management process through

environmental scanning of the determinants of the reward system that will result in the minimization of conflicts. Thus, collective bargaining is a necessary condition and not a sufficient condition for conflict resolution in organizations.

Recommendations

To actualize the facilitating role of the collective bargaining option in the resolution of conflicts in Chevron Nigeria Limited as well as other organizations, there is a need for proper management of the reward system in order to avoid huge differentials among different categories of employees. This is largely because salaries and other conditions of service are evidently potential sources of conflict, apart from the fact that conflicts can negatively affect organizations and their employees in sundry ways including loss of man-hours and decline in productivity and profitability. Besides, the need for high-level commitment by management and unions to collective agreements reached by both parties cannot be over-emphasized. In fact, in so far as employees are the most critical of all organizational resources and their capacity to function and contribute maximally to the achievement of organizational goals is a function of both their inward potentials and the outward environment in which they operate, the management of Chevron Nigeria Limited and other organizations should see the adoption and application of an ecological approach to the management of the collective bargaining option as a desideratum.

Finally, both the management of Chevron Nigeria Limited and the affiliated unions should genuinely realize and accept the value and potential benefits of collective bargaining and put in place a think-tank or special team that will periodically identify areas of disagreement, determine the frequency and magnitude of such problem areas and proffer solutions so as to avoid the escalation of such disagreements into costly and disruptive conflict.

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