

Influence of Industrial Conflict on Perceived Employee Work Performance in Selected Local Government Area in Osun State

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Abstract

The study, which adopted ex-post facto research design, investigated the influence of industrial conflict on perceived employee work performance. A total of one hundred and fifty (150) employees were drawn from three selected Local Government Secretariats (Irewole, Isokan and Ayedaade) in Osun state, Nigeria. In all, eighty-five (85) were males representing 65.4%, while the remaining forty five (45) were females representing 34.6% of the total participants. The age ranged between 19 - 56 years with a mean age of 34.46 years and standard deviation (SD) of 8.23 years. Five hypotheses were tested in the course of the study. The result obtained revealed that there was a significant relationship between industrial conflict and perceived work performance ($r(128) = 0.452, P < 0.05$). Similarly, there is no significant relationship between age of employee and perceived work performance ($r(128) = 0.178, P > 0.05$). The third hypothesis indicated that there is no significant gender difference on the perceived work performance ($t(2,128) = 0.167, P > 0.05$). The fourth hypothesis indicated that employee grade level has a significant relationship on the perceived work performance ($r(128) = 0.284, P < 0.05$). Finally, the fifth hypothesis indicated that there was a significant relationship between employee length of service on perceived work performance ($r(128) = 0.695, P < 0.05$). Based on the outcome of the results, conclusions were drawn and recommendation made with emphasis on the need to reduce industrial conflict through enhancement of employee's participation in decision making to improve productivity of employees.

Keywords: Industrial conflict, perceived work performance, employee, productivity, local government area

INTRODUCTION

Work performance is generally regarded as an unquestioned fact of life in most large organizations. This is because of its widely accepted and generally unquestioned benefits. When asked, most organizations would argue that the system brings about the benefits of employees being a given feedback regarding their performance, usually at least once a year so that action can be taken to rectify any weaknesses. This would hopefully lead to more effective performance and increased productivity, the system provides an opportunity for performance related discussions that could include; setting goals and work objectives for the employee, aligning individual and organizational goals, identifying training and development needs, and discussing career progression opportunities. The system results in a fair and valid basis for recognizing and rewarding individual performance, the person or persons doing the work may gain new insight into the person being appraised, and vice versa. In the process, the job of the person being appraised may be clarified and better defined; the employer would also be in a better position to understand the problems faced by the employees and employees will take

pride in their work when they reach a goal. In essence, the list of benefits highlighted above represents an ideal and perfect view of work performance. Those who study organization and the behaviour of people in organization are concerned with a host of issues, but work performance has always been the bottom line. Unless members of an organization do their jobs, the organization ultimately fails. Of recent, Blumberg and Pringle (1982) proposed a model of work performance that tries to improve on the traditional performance equation (performance = Ability x Motivation) by attempting to incorporate the full range of individual and environmental variables, which interact to produce level and quality of work performance. This model consists of three components, which they call Opportunity, Capacity and Willingness to perform. All organizations face the problem of directing the energies of their staff to the task of achieving organizational goals and objectives. In doing so, organizations need to devise means to influence and channel the behaviours of their employees so as to optimize their contributions. Work performance constitutes one of the major management tools employed in this process. This is based on the notion

that an individual's performance in a job is improved by having definite goals, feedback about their performance and complemented by an appropriate reward system

However, conflict is inherent and endemic in any organization because of the different goals and objectives employers pursue which are constantly changing. It is a dynamic process that usually involves two or more parties to each other and could be covert or overt. Conflict is decisive or crucial in the course of human relation whose outcome determines whether good or bad consequences will result. Industrial conflict could be organized, that is representing a conscious strategy on the part of the actor to change a situation defined as the source of discontent. In contrast, unorganized form of industrial conflict is usually individual phenomena neither recognized by the individual as an expression of conflict as such nor designed to change the identified source of discontent. Conflict can be destructive but in some other times constructive. When conflict takes attention away from other important activities or undermines employees' morale and eventually leads to irresponsible and damaging behaviour is considered destructive.

Industrial conflict is said to have started as soon as the employer-employee relationship emerges in the course of economic development. In practice, the employment relationship is based on the notion of exchange between the employer and the employee and focus on the area of work performance and it argued, therefore that industrial conflict is caused by the different values attached to what is being exchanged at the work place. Of all the resources used in an organization, to accomplish the set goals and objectives, human resource is the most, difficult to handle because of the unpredictable and complex nature of man. In every organization however, where different people of different attitudes, interests and desires work together the tendency is high that they are often at loggerheads. Although, it is understandable to the management and the staff of an organization that the two arms need to work harmoniously together for the attainment of the organizational goals, this expectation however, is not always fulfilled in practice, because the departments, units or groups share scarce resources or work activities and have different status, goals, roles values and perceptions.(Ojeleye , 2007)

At any rate, industrial conflicts unavoidably occur on daily basis within many organizations across the globe. On many occasions conflict results from differences in facts - this type of conflict centres on what is or what is not; methods - this stems from disagreement about procedures and about how something is done; goals and objectives is the disagreement about what is to be accomplished; the

values - this conflict stems from disagreement about what is right or wrong. The other causes of conflict result from the use of power or position lack of time, money, or other resources. While many people try to avoid conflict at all cost, conflict is simply inevitable in the workplace. Conflict is a normal part of everyday life on the job or off the job. In fact, conflict is an inherent feature of organization (Mullins, 1999). Undoubtedly, conflict results in reduced employee work performance because of lack of teamwork. However, there is a need to certify that this is so, hence, the work performance measurement system was evolved (Crouch, 1989). Implementing a work performance measurement system can seem like a daunting task, especially if there has never been a system in place in the past fears of employee retaliation, decreases in productivity and the introduction of a union are all perceived barriers to successful implementation. Benefits of implementing a work performance measurement system in an organization include increased productivity and accuracy, lower turnover, better labour planning and scheduling and decreased cycle time.

However, the instance of industrial conflict whenever or wherever it happens tends to have debilitating psychological effects on the workers involved; conflict usually have negative impact on the morale of employees. A sudden outbreak of conflict changes work performance and/or personal behaviour that could signal the beginning of problems at the workplace. The change can be due to poor communication between manager and employee repeated tardiness, absenteeism and misconduct. Furthermore, conflict create bad feelings, resentment and hostility that would not enable the employees to work together as a team and a resultant decline in work performance, low productivity, loss of customers, high labour turnover, adverse effects on the goodwill of the organization and complete collapse of the organization. To avoid the aforementioned implications, it is very necessary to implement a work performance measurement system, which will serve as an indicator for an increase or decline in employee work performance.

Nevertheless, when conflict occurs within an organization, how it is resolved before it assumes a tragic proportion and adversely affects the productivity of employees is the challenge for many employers. Management of conflict in an organization in an effective manner is also predicated on the fact that employees have several other vital responsibilities aside from their jobs; personal and family concerns may interfere with an employee's work. Issues ranging from financial problems to marital problems and alcohol or drug abuse are increasingly common among employees. It is also possible to manage a conflict without resolution, in forms of avoidance, without resolving the underlying

dispute by getting the parties to recognize that they disagree but that no further action could be taken at that time (Waal & Frans, 2000). Industrial conflict endangers the work environment and makes it uncomfortable for the employees to perform to satisfaction. In virtually all organizations where people of different behaviours, interests and values must work together as a team, conflict occurrence is realistically inevitable and when it becomes too frequent and unabated, the overall employee work performance, in terms of productivity begins to plummet and all progress within the organization becomes so fragile. By and large, the inevitability of industrial strife and its concomitant effects on the work performance of the employees' vis-à-vis the general output of the organization makes the study of this nature vitally important. .

Conflict management (also known as conflict resolution) is the process of resolving these differences (Sambamurthy & Poole, 1992; Green & Taber, 1980). The resolution of conflict can lead to both positive and negative outcomes. For example, Robey's work on conflict among software developers posits conflict as a mostly negative effect (Robey, 1993; Robey, 1989; Robey & Farrow, 1989). According to Sawyer, (2001), there are at least two reasons why conflict and its management are critical aspects of team-based software development of an IT firm. The first reason is that conflict is endemic among people when they work together (Green & Taber, 1980). For instance, when two developers bring contradictory data regarding system requirements to a meeting, the members of that software development team must sort through the differences and reach a shared understanding of the meaning of these disparate pieces (Crowston & Kammerer, 1998). Resolving this type of conflict demands both an articulation of differences and a negotiation of alternatives to develop a reasonable compromise, agreement, or shared understanding (Robey, 1989). Moreover, there is a diminished benefit for working together in teams if this does not create some level of conflict. Group work provides one means of bringing multiple perspectives to bear on a common problem. A lack of conflict among team members is often called "group-think" and the literature provides several examples of poor decisions from groups with *too little* conflict (Janus, 1982;).

The second reason conflict is an important aspect of team-based software development is the relationship between conflict management and team-level performance (Barki & Hartwick, 1994; Robey, 1993;). From the example above, constructive conflict management would use the two differing requirements needs to improve the shared understanding of the issues, leading to improved team efforts (Green & Taber, 1980; Robey, 1989). However, failing to resolve the differences between

the two pieces of information the developers brought to the team is likely to have negative consequences. Team-level characteristics serve as another common antecedent to conflict. For example, Newman and Robey (1992) highlight how the act of working together creates a set of social structures within which the software developer's work and that guide resource allocation. .

In another related study to explain reasons why there seems to be gender difference in job performance, Brown and Corcoran (1997) argued that one possible explanation for the significant increase in the gender gap in mean performance when assessing worker's performance is gender difference in risk-attitude. Other studies that set out to give reasons for gender difference in job performance came up with results that seem mixed, with a possibly higher degree of risk aversion among women. According to Brown and Joseph (1996) most often, women internalize stereotype about women being less good at certain tasks, or performing worse uncompetitive working environment. Thus, according to the researchers, the effect is of course identical to the one where these beliefs are based on actual differences.

Avolio, Waldman and McDaniel (1990) examined the relative explanatory power of age and total years of experience in an occupation for predicting supervisory ratings of work performance. Their findings indicated that experience was a better predictor of performance than age. A breakdown of jobs into five occupational groupings revealed a moderating effect for occupational type.

Theoretical Framework

Emotional Intelligence Theory was developed by Goleman (1998). This theory is based on emotional intelligence competencies that have been identified in internal research at hundreds of corporations and organizations as distinguishing outstanding performers. Focusing on emotional intelligence as a theory of performance, it looks at the physiological evidence underlying emotional intelligence theory, and reviews a number of studies of the drivers of workplace performance and the factors that distinguish the best individuals from the average ones. Emotional intelligence reflects how an individual's potential for mastering the skills of Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, and Relationship Management translates into on-the-job success.

An emotional competence is "a learned capability based on emotional intelligence that results in outstanding performance at work" (Goleman, 1998). To be adept at an emotional competence like Customer Service or Conflict Management requires an underlying ability in emotional intelligence fundamentals, specifically, Social Awareness and

Relationship Management. However, emotional competencies are learned abilities: having Social Awareness or skill at managing relationship does not guarantee we have mastered the additional learning required to handle a customer adeptly or to resolve a conflict-just that we have the potential to become skilled at these competencies.

Enjoyment-Performance Theory was propounded by Harrison (2005) and the basic assumption of this theory is that an individual will perform more effectively in a job if that individual enjoys the type of tasks that are required by a job has interests that relate to the position, and the work environment conditions correspond with the person's work environment preferences. In other words, the enjoyment of all the various aspects of a job is a significant indication of a higher level of performance, assuming the person has the education and training necessary for the work done. Harrison (2005) research indicates that the enjoyment of these various aspects is highly correlated with the good performance. Behavioural theory tells us that we tend to do the things that bring us enjoyment and avoid the things that bring us displeasure. The enjoyment of a particular type of activity produces the tendency to do that type of activity more often. The enjoyment-performance theory extends behavioural theory to say that when we enjoy and thus do an activity more often, we tend to get better at it. Employers that enjoy most aspects of their work tend to perform more effectively. The more an employee tends to dislike aspects of his/her work, the lesser the performance. Thus if we are able to determine the degree to which a person will enjoy the various aspects of a job, we will have a strong indication of the probability of success in the job, assuming the person has the education and experience necessary for the position.

STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESES

The hypothesis to be tested within the context of this study includes:

- 1 There is no significant relationship between industrial conflict and perceived work performance.
- 2 There is no significant relationship between age of employee and perceived work performance.
- 3 There are no significant gender differences on perceived employee work performance.
- 4 There is no significant relationship between employees' grade level and perceived work performance.
- 5 There is no significant relationship between employee length of service and perceived work performance.

METHOD

The study is a survey that adopted ex-post facto research design in approach. The dependent variable of the study is perceived work performance, while the

independent variable is industrial conflict among employees.

STUDY POPULATION AND SAMPLE SIZE

The population for this study consists of employees from some selected local government secretariat in Osun State. A total of 130 respondents were used for the study. This sample were selected purposively from three selected local government area in Osun State which are: Irewole local Government Area in Ikire, Isokan local Government Area in Apomu and Ayedaade local Government Area in Gbongan..

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The questionnaire method was adopted for this study. The questionnaire was made up of three sections, namely section A, B and C. Section A consists of bio-data information which includes age, sex, marital status, years spent in service, grade level and highest educational level attained by the respondents.

Section B consists of a 9-item scale measuring perception of industrial conflicts developed by the researcher for the purpose of this study. Response format ranged from Yes (2) or No (1). The instrument was designed by the researcher following a standard protocol of first generating items from the themes of focus group discussion and in-depth in interview. The scale has an estimated reliability scale of 0.74 and an unbiased estimated reliability of 0.77 was found for the scale.

Section C measures perceived work performance. This was done using a 14 - item scale developed by Whetten and Cameron (1995). Participants were expected to express their degree of agreement with statement on a 5-point Likert scale. The degree of responses ranges from very good = 5 to very poor = 1. The scoring of items was reversed where necessary and then summated to form a single score. The coefficient alpha for this scale as reported by the authors was 0.77. But for this study, the scale has a Guttman reliability coefficient of 0.81 and alpha of 0.51.

PROCEDURE

Questionnaires were administered to respondents who are employee from three local Government Area (Irewole, Isokan and Ayedaade) in Osun state. A total of 130 questionnaires were administered in all the three Local Government Area. Due permission was obtained and written consent granted by Head of Personnel in the three local Governments. The personnel officer in each of the three local Governments assisted the researcher on how to distribute the questionnaires to the employees. The questionnaires were given to the respondents on an individual basis. Each took up to 25 minutes for completion and effort was made to clarify items that were not clear to the respondents.

ANALYSIS

Both descriptive and inferential statistics was used to analyze the data collected from the field. The descriptive statistics was used for the analysis of the socio-demographic variables, while Pearson-product

moment correlation and t-test of independent sample was used to test the hypothesis that was generated from the review of literature.

Table I: Showing Percentage Distribution Of Sociodemographic Variable Of Respondents.

Variables	Group	Frequency	Percentage
Age	19-29 years	36	27.7
	30-43 years	69	54.6
	44-55 years	25	17.7
	Total	130	100
Sex	Male	85	65.4
	Female	45	34.6
	Total	130	100
Marital Status	Single	23	17.7
	Married	93	71.5
	Divorced	7	5.4
	Widowed	7	5.4
	Total	130	100
Rank	Junior	45	34.6
	Senior	85	65.4
	Total	130	100
Grade level	3-7	55	42.3
	8-12	57	37.7
	13-15	18	20.0
	Total	130	100
Length of service	10 years	49	37.7
	6 years	39	30.0
	3 years	26	20.0
	1 year	9	6.9
	3 months	5	3.8
	1 month	1	0.8
	less	1	0.8
	Total	130	100

Source: Field survey.

From the table drawn above, it could be observed that out of 130 respondents, 36 respondents were between 19 and 29 years at 27.7%, 69 respondents were between 30 and 43 years at 54.6% and 25 respondents between 44 and 55 years at 17.7% respectively. The table also shows the sex distribution of the respondents. As shown above, the percentage of respondents by sex shows that 85 (65.4%) respondents are male and the remaining 45(34.6%) are female. These illustrates that the study cuts across both sexes (i.e. male and female). On the marital status, the single respondents contribute 23(17.7%), married respondents contribute 93(71.5%) and followed by the divorced and widowed that contributes the least score which is 7(5.4%) each.

Examining the respondents across rank, it could be observed from the table that the least score was from the junior respondents 45 (34.6%).and the senior respondents contribute the largest score 85(65.4%). On the grade level, it could also be observed that out of 130 respondents, 55 respondents were between grade level 3 and 7 at 42.3%, 57 respondents between grade level 8 and 12 at 37.7% and 18 respondents were between grade level 13 and 15 at 20.0%.

Finally, on the length of years in service, those that spent 10 years contribute the largest respondents of 49 at 37.7%, those that spent 6 years in service at

39(30.0%), 3 years in service at 26(20.0%), 1 year in service at 9(6.9%), 3 months in service at 5(3.8%), 1 month in service at 1(0.8%) and those that have spent less than 1 month at 1(0.8%).

HYPOTHESES TESTING

Hypothesis One

Which stated that there is no significant relationship between industrial conflict and perceived work performance?

Table II. Pearson product-moment analysis of relationship between industrial conflict and perceived work performance

Variable	N	Mean	SD	R-cal	R-val	Df	P
Industrial conflict	130	34.33	0.476	0.452	0.195	128	<0.05
Perceived work performance	130	34.64	2.641				

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used in testing this hypothesis. The result shows that there is relationship between industrial conflict and perceived work performance ($r(128) = 0.452$, $P < 0.05$). However, the stated hypothesis is rejected at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated value (0.452) is greater than the table value (0.195), the stated hypothesis is rejected and conclusion is made that there is a significant relationship between industrial conflict and perceived work performance.

Hypothesis Two

Which stated that there is no significant relationship between age of employee and perceived work performance?

TABLE III: Pearson product-moment analysis of relationship between age of employee and perceived work performance

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R-cal	R-val	df	P
Age of employee	130	34.46	8.23	0.178	0.195	128	>0.05
Perceived work performance	130	34.64	7.47				

The above hypothesis was tested using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The result indicated that there is no significant relationship between age of employee and perceived work performance ($r(128) = 0.178$, $P > 0.05$). Hence, the stated hypothesis is accepted at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated value (0.178) is lesser than the table value (0.195), the stated hypothesis is accepted. Thus, age of employee has no significant relationship with perceived work performance.

Hypothesis Three

There is no significant gender difference on perceived employee work performance.

Table IV: t-test analysis of gender difference on perceived employee work performance

VARIABLE	N	Mean	SD	T-CAL	T-VAL	df	P
Male	85	61.435	5.308	0.167	1.96	128	>0.05
Female	45	61.267	5.809				

The stated hypothesis is tested using statistical t-test and the result shows that there is no gender differences on perceived employee work performance ($t(2,128) = 0.167$, $P > 0.05$). This indicate that the $t_{\text{cal}}(0.167) > t_{\text{value}}(1.96)$, hence the stated hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, it can be deduced that there is no significant gender difference on perceived work performances at 0.05 level of significance. Thus, conclusion is made that there is no significant gender difference on perceived work performance.

Hypothesis Four

There is no significant relationship between employee grade level and perceived work performance.

Table V: Pearson product-moment analysis of relationship of employee grade level and perceived work performance

Variable	N	Mean	SD	R-cal	R-val	df	P VAL
Employee grade level	130	33.47	2.732	0.284	0.195	128	<0.05
Perceived work performance	130	34.64	2.641				

In testing this hypothesis, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used. The result indicated a significant relationship of employee grade level on perceived work performance ($r(128) = 0.284$, $P < 0.05$). Hence, the stated hypothesis is rejected at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated value (0.284) is greater than the table value (0.195), the stated hypothesis is rejected and conclusion is made that there is a significant relationship of employee grade level on perceived work performance.

Hypothesis Five

There is no significant relationship between employee length of service and perceived work performance.

TABLE VI: Pearson product-moment analysis of relationship between employee length of service on perceived work performance.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	R-cal	R-val	df	P
Employee length of service	130	30.27	2.131	0.695	0.195	128	<0.05
Perceived Work performance	130	34.64	2.641				

In testing this hypothesis, the Pearson product-moment was used. The result indicated that employee length of service has a significant relationship on perceived work performance ($r(128) = 0.695$, $P < 0.05$). Hence, the stated hypothesis is rejected at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated (0.685) value is greater than the table value (0.195), the stated hypothesis is rejected and conclusion is made that there is a significant relationship of employee length of service on perceived work performance.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Hypothesis one which stated that there is no significant relationship between industrial conflict and perceived work performance was tested and the result revealed that the hypothesis was not supported. This finding contradicts the studies of Barkki and Hartwick, (1994), and Robey (1993) who found out that conflict is an important aspect of team-based software development and that there is a relationship between conflict management and team-level performance. However, hypothesis two which stated that there is no significant relationship between age of employee and perceived work performance was tested. The result obtained revealed that the stated hypothesis was not supported. This indicated that as the age increases, the self-rating on work performance decrease in the present study. This outcome is consistent with previous studies of Avolio, Waldman and McDaniel (1999) who found out that relative explanatory power of age and total years of experience in an occupation for predicting supervisory ratings of work performance and their findings indicated that experience was a better predictor of performance than age, thus their studies

exhibit non-linear relationships with work performance.

Hypothesis three which stated that there is no significant gender differences on perceived work performance revealed that the stated hypothesis was confirmed. The result indicated that male and female employees do not differ significantly with the way they perceive their output on the work. This outcome contradicts the studies of Brown and Corcoran (1997) who argued that one possible explanation for the significant increase in the gender gap in mean performance when assessing worker's performance is gender difference in risk-attitude. Other studies that set out to give reasons for gender difference in job performance which was contrary to the findings of the hypothesis came up with results that seem mixed, with a possibly higher degree of risk aversion among women.

Hypothesis four which stated that there is no significant relationship between employees grade level and work performance was tested and revealed that the stated hypothesis was rejected, thus there is a significant relationship between employees grade level and work performance. This finding collaborates with the study of Avolio, Waldman and McDaniel (1990) found out that the relative explanatory powers of age and experience in an occupation, which relate to grade level for predicting supervising ratings of work performance. Finally, hypothesis five which stated that there is no significant relationship between employee length of service and perceived work performance was tested and the findings revealed that the hypothesis is rejected. This outcome is not consistent with the outcome of previous studies of Avolio, Waldman and McDaniel (1990) who found out that experience was a better predictor of performance than age.

CONCLUSION

This study has been able to provide answers to the research questions and fulfils the research objectives by testing the hypotheses proposed in the study. From analysis, it can be concluded that:-

- ❖ There is a significant relationship between industrial conflict and perceived work performance.
- ❖ There is a weak negative relationship between age of employee and perceived work performance.
- ❖ There is no significant difference gender difference on perceived work performance.
- ❖ There is a positive relationship between employee grade level and perceived work performance.
- ❖ There is a positive relationship between employee length of service and perceived work performance.

RECOMMENDATION

Management of industrial conflict is a common phenomenon in industrial relations. In order to reduce industrial conflicts, the following solutions have been suggested, they include inter alia, installation of good communication network, immediate solutions to problems of employees, uniformity in the handling of workers' grievances, enhancement of workers' participation in decision making, education of workers on industrial relations, good leadership style, adequate motivation as at when due, industrial democracy and adequate delegation of authority.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

This study is by no means exhaustive. One major limitation of this study is the sample size. The sample size of 130 respondents in the study area was not a fair representative of employees in Nigeria on whom the findings of the study would be generalized. The fact that the study was limited to public establishment was also a barrier. The researcher would have loved to sample respondents in the private-owned establishment; perhaps the outcome would have been different. The enumerated limitation of this study advises any researcher who want to replicate this study to endeavour to use a large sample size comprising both public and private establishment for further research. Moreover, the present study focuses on the influence of industrial conflict on perceived work performance, moderating roles such as organizational support, workplace justice, organizational citizenship behaviour and personality factors should also be examined. It is therefore suggested that future studies should incorporate the aforementioned variables into the framework to determine their individual and joint contribution to perceived work performance of employee.

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