UNIVERSITY ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION CLIMATE AND MANAGEMENT OF INDUSTRIAL CONFLICT

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Abstract
This study examined the influence of university organizational communication climate and industrial conflict in selected state universities in Nigeria. The study adopted the survey research design of the ex-post facto. A total of 250 participants across three state owned universities were selected through proportionate stratified random sampling. Two instruments namely: Organizational communication climate scale (OCCS) \((r=0.44)\) and Industrial conflict management scale (ICMS) \((r=0.82)\) were used for data collection. The only one hypothesis developed to pilot the study was tested at 0.05 level of confidence. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was the statistical tool applied for the analysis of data for the study. The findings of the study showed that Communication climate accounted for 58.0% of the total variance in industrial conflict management. Organizational communication climate variables influenced industrial conflict management in selected state owned universities in southwestern Nigeria. Therefore, governments, university administrators, union leaders and members; and other stakeholders should be more proactive in ensuring that positive organizational communication climate is created to foster management of conflict in universities.

Keywords: University organizational communication climate, industrial conflict management

Introduction
Essentially, in organizations, the availability, sharing and flow of information, alongside other communication factors can be supportive factors for successful performance (Warne, Ali & Pascoe, 2003). Effective communication enables the flow of information, which invariably helps both the management and the employees to take full responsibilities in creating satisfactory work climate across the organization (Tukiainen, 2001; Krizan, Merrier, Logan, & Williams, 2005). Hence, communication flow in organizations must follow a process. This climate involves trust, openness, information adequacy, information quality, information flow, participative management and reinforcement of good communication practices as well as shared responsibilities for making communication effective (Ijaduola, 2008).

Emphasizing the importance of this logical sequence of communication flow in an organization, Asekun-Olarinmoye (2006) opines that the communication climate of an organization largely determines the cooperativeness of individuals with the organizational goals. Communication climate relates to only communication phenomena such as judgments concerning receptivity of management to employees or the accuracy of information disseminated in the organization (Dillard, Wigand & Booster, 1994).

Organizational Communication Climate is seen as jointly determined by the individual worker and organizational management (Ashforth & Lee, 1990). Aina (2005) citing Irving (1952) expressed the importance of communication climate thus ‘what we know as business, government and community, activities could not be (but it is not enough for) to talk to each other…… they need to know how to talk with others too.

This study was embarked upon to find out the extent to which organizational communication climate determine industrial conflict management in selected state-owned universities in Nigeria.

Hypothesis
The only hypothesis tested in the study posits that: There is no significant relationship between organizational communication climate and the industrial conflict management in selected state owned universities.

Methodology
This study employed the descriptive survey research design of the ex post facto type. Two types of questionnaire namely Organizational Communication Climate Scale and Industrial Conflict Management Scale were the major instrument of data collection. The sample for the study consists of 250 university staff from selected universities. From 5 stratified groups (unions) in the university system in three universities namely management, ASUU, SSANU, NASU and NAAT. The scale (OCCS) has seven subsections and the items are structured to measure organizational communication climate in the university system. The total scale measured five dimensions of organizational communication climate including communication openness, information adequacy and regularity, information quality and reliability, pattern of information flow, participative management, while the second questionnaire known as Industrial Conflict Management Scale was developed by Putnam & Wilson (1982). It measured how individuals applied different verbal and non verbal communication strategies to manage conflicts across organizational contexts. There are thirty (30) items in the ICMS, and the respondents indicated how often they use a particular conflict management strategy on a four point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Disagree). The ICMS measured the conflict management styles: non confrontation strategies (avoid disagreements, downplay controversies, or approach conflict indirectly, thus to move away from the opposition), solution oriented strategies (use compromise and innovation to move toward the opposition), and control strategies (use verbal and nonverbal communication to insist on positions and emphasize demands, move against the opposition) (Downs, 1994). Among the 30 items, 12 measured non confrontation strategies, 11 items measured solution oriented strategies involving collaboration (6 items) and compromise (5 items), and 7 items measured control strategies. The three state owned universities selected for the study were:

a) Olabisi Onabanjo University
b) Lagos state University
c) Ladoke Akintola University of Technology

The age range of the respondents is between 29-62 years. Two research assistants were employed to administer the instrument on the respondents in the universities.

Results
Ho: There is no significant relationship between organizational communication and industrial conflict management in selected state owned universities.

Table 4.1: Effect of organizational communication climate on industrial conflict management in selected state owned universities in Nigeria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Communication Climate</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.44*</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Conflict Management</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** significant at P< 0.05

From the above table, the mean score of organizational communication climate was 2.48 with standard deviation of 1.03 while the mean score of industrial conflict management was 2.73 with standard deviation of 1.22. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) of the variable was found to be moderately positively correlated (r=0.44**) with p-values less than 0.05 (p<0.05). This shows that there is significant relationship between organization communication climate and industrial conflict management. It follows therefore that organizational communication climate significantly determines industrial conflict management.

Discussion
This result corroborates the studies of Jingisha (2002) and Asekun- Olarinmoye (2006) which affirm the influence of organizational communication climate on employee performance in organizations. Varona (1996) also notes that communication climate factors are very potent in achieving individual and collective satisfaction of employees in organizations. Furthermore, the findings from this study confirms the report of the NUC (1996), Saint (1992) which expressed that
most conflictual situations in Nigerian universities have been attributed to communication and information problems among the actors within the university. This confirms Fajana’s (2006) submission that for effective conflict management in universities effective communication flow is not negotiable while Alabi (2002) admits that the effectiveness of the university as an academic enterprise for effective communication flow rests on the administrative support machinery.

Conclusion
This study establishes that organizational communication climate in universities significantly influenced management of industrial conflict. It revealed that the communication climate in Nigerian universities needs to be seriously addressed to ensure a harmonious and peaceful working environment.

Recommendations
It is recommended that the administrators of universities create an enduring and open communicative environment that will allow regular information flow between and across all stakeholders in the system (organization).

References


