Full Length Research Paper

Influence of workers' training programmes on conflict reduction in industrial organizations in Nigeria

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This study investigated the influence of workers' training programmes on conflict reduction among industrial workers in Nigeria. This is for the purpose of ascertaining the relevance of workers' training programmes, as an alternative approach to human capital formation and conflict reduction among industrial workers in Nigeria. A total of 416 respondents were selected for the study using stratified sampling technique to reflect the two strata of public and private organizations. Two sets of questionnaires, with five subscales, titled 'workers training programmes scale (WTPS) and conflict reduction scale (CRS)' were used for data collection. All the hypothesized research questions were tested using Regression Analysis and t-test statistical methods at 0.05 alpha levels. The findings revealed that workers' training programmes (taken together) had significantly influenced conflict reduction among industrial workers. It was also found that only three independent variables (computer skill training, labour relations skill training and interpersonal treatment skill training) have significantly influenced conflict reduction. However, it was found that management skill, conflict skill and communication skill training programmes were not as significant in influencing conflict reduction in work organization. Also, there was no significant difference in the level of both female and male workers' participation in workers' training programmes in both public and private organizations selected for the study. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that workers' training programmes should be given priority by all establishments in order to forestall industrial peace for all levels of workers. Also, training needs of the organization as well as that of workers must be identified before making recommendations for training. This will possibly foster specialization and encourage technical-driven training in work organizations.

Key words: Nigeria, workers, training programmes, conflict reduction, organizations,

INTRODUCTION

Organizational management requires certain managerial skills for effectiveness and efficiency in resource utilization for results. In work organization across the world, productivity, improved performance and competitive advantage had become issues of concern among the stakeholders. It has been argued invariably that workers' training tends to foster effective utilization of organizational resources. However, it can be immediately ascertained whether workers` training programmes have a direct positive influence on job security, increased productivity and improved workers' performance among workers (Omole, 2003; Onimode, 1999; Olagunju, 2001). Similarly, it was reported by some researchers

(Johnbul, 2001; Rita, 2004; Peterson, 2004) that manpower development programmes did not have any form of influence directly or indirectly on job satisfaction, reduction in industrial strike and conflict reduction in work organization, while some other schools of thought holds a quite opposite view. These findings require further empirical verification. However, Akintayo (1998) observed that organizations invest a colossal margin of time, energy and funds on designing and implementing appropriate manpower development programmes for its employees. This is usually with a view to ensuring that employees attain the optimal functional level and productivity. However, the facts still remain that this level

of investment in man power development may not be a major point of job security for employees.

Armstrong (2002) asserts that human resource development is concerned with providing learning and development opportunities, making training intervention and planning, conducting and evaluating training programmes. The author discloses that the overall aim of manpower development programmes is to see that the organization has the quality of workforce its needs to attain its goals for improved performance and growth.

Ahanor (1990) submits that the objective of manpower development programmes in any work organization is achieved by ensuring as far as possible, that everyone in the organization has the knowledge and skills and reaches the level of competence required to carry out their works effectively. Similarly, Osterman (1995) posits that the performance of individual employees and teams in work organization is subject to continuous improvement on their skills and employees should be developed in a way that maximizes their potentials.

Oloyede (2005) and Beach (1998) contend that human assets grow and increase in value; maintaining and upgrading employees' skills not only tend to increase productivity, but also increase commitment and motivation. The authors assert further that the approach to manpower development within the firm will vary according to the technology, traditional policies and the value of management. Akintayo (1995) posits that multinational firms in Nigeria had invested heavily in manpower development programmes to develop their talents and skills and had virtually impacted employees' improved performance and organizational productivity.

On-the-job training, according to Fajana (2004), Lyod and Reynolds (1994), is particularly for all levels of employees being employed to achieve certain specified organizational goals. The authors maintain that the individual employee becomes accustomed to the machinery and materials that he will use in his subsequent work and to learn in the same physical and social environment. The point of view of these authors tends to suggest that on-the-job training is a specific form of job instruction, geared toward imparting and acquiring those skills and attitudes needed by the workers to perform particular function effectively. On the other hand, the off-the-job training method as perceived by Zymelman (2000) differs from the former in that, it occurs in a location removed from production or a revenue earning environment. Thus, workers trained outside the working place tend to acquire skills for proficiency and effectiveness on the job (Olaniyi, 2006).

Koehorst and Verhoevon (2002), Steinmetz (1990), Bass and Vaghan (1991), Whitefield (2000), Oloyede (2000), Akintayo and Babajide (2005), Milkman (1997), Maglen and Hopkins (1998), Schular (2005) and Zymelman (2000) reported that manpower development programmes had been found to be capable of influencing: high turnover of profit, improved quality of service, better use of human resources, increased safety on the job (reduced number of accidents), increased staff motivation, less resistance to change, less cost due to human error, more efficiency and productivity.

The literature reviewed in this study establishes the relationship between manpower development programmes and motivation, productivity, quality of service delivery and occupational safety. Most of the studies did not focus on workers' training programmes as they affect conflict reduction. In the existing literature, it has been argued severally and there has not been any concrete agreement on whether or not organizations should invest heavily on training programmes. This is especially true, because it has not been clearly established whether workers' training programmes have any influence on conflict reduction or not, hence this study.

Statement of the problem

Against this background, this study investigated the influence of workers' training programmes on conflict reduction in work organizations in Nigeria. This is for the purpose of ascertaining the relevance of skill acquisition and utilization to conflict reduction among industrial workers in Nigeria.

Research questions

The following research questions were generated for the study:

(1) What is the combined influence of worker` training programmes (Labour relations skill training, Interpersonal treatment skill training, Computer skill training, Conflict management skill training and Communication skill training) on conflict reduction?
(2) What is the strength of causation of predictor variables (worker` training programmes) on conflict reduction?
(3) Is there any significant gender difference in exposure of workers to workers` training programmes?
(4) Is there any significant difference in exposure of workers to workers` training programmes in public and private organizations?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

There are two sectors of organization in Nigeria. They are the private and the public sectors of organizations. It is the characteristic of these organizations to organize training programmes for their workers irrespective of their levels of education, once they are employed. Out of these numerous organizations, six were randomly selected for this study. These include three private organizations (First Bank of Nigeria Plc, Guiness Nigerian Plc and Nigerian Portland Cement Plc) and three public organizations (Power Holding of Nigeria Plc, University of Ibadan, Ibadan and Federal Civil Service Commission).

However, all employees in these organizations formed the

population for the study. A total of 416 respondents were selected for the study using stratified sampling technique. The stratified sampling technique was used to select respondents on the basis of the two strata of organizations (Private and Public) and gender (male and female). Thus, a sample size of 208 respondents, which represent 50% of the selected population, was randomly selected from each of the two types of organizations (public and private).

Moreover, 235 (56.5%) male respondents and 181(43.5%) female respondents participated in the study. The age range of the respondents was from 30 - 60 years, with mean age of 23.57 and standard deviation of 10.65.

Instrumentation

Instrument used in this study include records obtained from the selected work organizations. Besides, two sets of structured questionnaire, with five subscales, were used for data collection. These include: workers' training programmes scale (WTPS) and conflict reduction scale (CRS). The following workers' training scales were utilized for data collection: Labour relations skill training scale (LRSTS), Interpersonal Treatment Skill Training Scale (MSTS), computer skill training scale (CSTS), conflict management skill training scale (CMSTS) and communication skill training scale (CSTS).

Workers' training programmes scale (WTPS)

The workers' training programmes Scale (WTPS), developed by Omole (2004), contains 32 items relating to workers' training programmes as its affects conflict reduction among industrial workers. It was divided into 3 sections: A, B and C. Section A contains 10 items concerning the personal bio-data of the respondents. For instance, name of organization, type of organization, marital status, age, sex, highest educational qualification, working experiences, etc.

Section B contains 12 items, which focused on the various forms and types of training programmes undergone by the respondents. For instance, in organization, workers have been exposed to the following training programmes: labour relations training, interpersonal treatment training, computer training, management skill training and effective communication skill training. Also, skills are usually updated through: on-the-job training, off-the-job training, vestibule training, and apprenticeship training, etc.

Section C contains 10 items relating to relationship between workers' training and conflict reduction. For instance, in organization, participation in training programmes guarantees peaceful co-existence, industrial harmony, team work spirit, good working relations, sustainability of workers' cooperation, increase in workers' salaries, workers' recognition at work place, reduction in industrial conflict, improved profit turnover, etc. The response format was a modified four point Likert type rating scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree. The author reported co-efficient alpha of 0.87 among the executives. For the present study, alpha co-efficient of 0.91 was obtained.

Management skill training scale (MSTS)

The management skill training scale (MSTS) developed by Olaniyi (2006) contains 15 items relating to participation in managerial skill training and job security of industrial workers. The MSTS comprises of two sections: A and B. Section A contains information on demographic information, which includes: Name of organization, age, sex, highest educational qualification, length of service with the present organization, etc. Section B consists of items relating to workers job security as being affected by participation in managerial

skill training. These include: Enhancement of profitization, effective quality control, substantiality of central interest and goals of stakeholders, job retention, reduction in labour turnover, loss of job, reduced intents to quit by workers, occurrence of unemployment, etc. The modified four point Likert type response rating scale ranging from 4= Strongly Agree (SA), to 1=Strongly Disagree (SD) was adopted for the study. The author reported reliability co-efficient of 0.83. For the present study, alpha co-efficient of 0.85 was obtained.

Computer skill training scale (CSTS)

The computer skill training scale (CSTS) developed by Shadare (2001) contains 16 items relating to computer manipulation skill training as it affects job security of the workers. It was divided into sections A and B. Section A contains 6 items concerning the personal bio-data of the respondents. For instance: Name of organization, marital status, age, sex, highest educational qualification, working experience, etc.

Section B contains 10 items, which focus on relationship of workers' participation in computer skill training programme and their job security. For instance, in organization, participation in computer manipulation skill training programme has fostered effective resource management, increased productivity, reduction in staff strength, reduction in work load, increased job loss, career growth and development, job retention, assurance of continuous membership of the organization, etc. The author reported reliability co-efficient of 0.73. For the present study, alpha co-efficient of 0.78 was obtained. The response format was a modified four point Likert type rating scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree.

Conflict management skill training scale (CMSTS)

The conflict management skill training scale (CMSTS) developed by Whitfield (2000) contains 12 items relating to conflict management skill training as it affects job security of the workers. It was divided into sections A and B. Section A contains 6 items relating to the demographic information about the respondents. For instance: Name of organization, marital status, age, sex, highest educational qualification, working experience, etc.

Section B contains 10 items which focused on relationship of conflict management skill training and job security of the workers. For instance, in organization, participation in conflict management skill training program has fostered improved labour-management relations, industrial peace and harmony, workers` commitment, loyalty to organization, cordial interpersonal relations at workplace, etc. The author reported reliability co-efficient of 0.78. For the present study, alpha co-efficient of 0.81 was obtained. The response format was a modified four point Likert type rating scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree.

Communication skill training scale (CSTS)

The communication skill training scale (CSTS) was developed by Maglen and Hopkins (1998) with 17 items relating to communication climate and workers job security. For instance, as a result of participation in effective communication skill training programme, workers are assured of job security, proficiency in written and spoken English Language, ability to utilize modern communication technology effectively, participating actively in discussion of issues and problems affecting the organization, participating well in decision making process, etc. The response format was a modified four point Likert type rating scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. The author reported a co-efficient

alpha of 0.76 among executives. For the present study, alpha co-efficient of 0.79 was obtained.

Labour relations skill training scale (LRSTS)

The labour relations skill training scale (LRSTS) was developed by Huselid (1995) which contains 22 items relating to labour relations skill training as it affects job security of the workers. It was divided into sections A and B. Section A contains 10 items concerning the personal bio-data of the respondents. For instance: Name of organization, marital status, age, sex, highest educational qualification, working experiences, etc.

Section B contains 12 items which focused on relationship of labour relations skill training and job security of workers. For instance, in organization, participation in labour relations skill training programme has fostered job security, job involvement, good placement on the job, participation in decision making process, serious attachment to the organization, etc. The author reported reliability co-efficient of 0.87. For the present study, alpha co-efficient of 0.89 was obtained. The response format was a modified 4 point Likert rating scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree.

Interpersonal treatment skill training scale (ITSTS)

The interpersonal treatment skill training scale (ITSTS) was developed by Zymelman (2000) and it contains 16 items relating to interpersonal treatment skill training as it affects job security of the workers. It was divided into sections A and B. Section A contains 6 items concerning the personal bio-data of the respondents. For instance: Name of organization, marital status, age, sex, highest educational qualification, working experience, etc.

Section B contains 10 items which focused on relationship of interpersonal treatment skill training and job security of workers. For instance, in the organization, participation in interpersonal treatment skill training programme has fostered continuity of membership of the organization, guarantee of confidence of service to organization, assurance of organizational support, security against job hazard, cordial relationship among/ between workers and the employer, etc. The author reported reliability co-efficient of 0.83. For the present study, alpha co-efficient of 0.85 was obtained. The response format was a modified 4 point Likert type rating scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree.

Conflict reduction scale (CRS)

The conflict reduction scale (CRS) developed by Akintayo (2004) contains 12 items relating to conflict reduction among workers at workplace. It was divided into sections A and B. Section A contains 6 items concerning the personal bio-data of the respondents. For instance: Name of organization, martial status, age, sex, highest educational qualification, working experience, etc.

Section B contains 6 items, which focused on conflict reduction. For instance, in the organization, there is cooperation among co-workers, no threat of conflicting situation, no signal of unhealthy rivalry, promotion of culture of peace, increased job loss, etc. The author reported reliability co-efficient of 0.81. For the present study, alpha co-efficient of 0.81 was obtained. The response format was a modified four point Likert type rating scale ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 4 strongly agree.

Procedure

The researcher administered the measuring scales, which guarantee anonymity of the respondents, personally with the assistance of three trained research assistants. The researcher consulted with the Director of Personnel Administration in each of the selected private and public organizations in Nigeria, in order to intimate them with the purpose of the study and all aspects of the questionnaire to the respondents were explained. Through the help of the Directors of Personnel Administration, the questionnaires were administered with ease. However, it took a period of four weeks to administer and retrieve the distributed measuring scales due to geographical location of Nigeria. Meanwhile, out of 435 copies of questionnaire administered in the selected organizations, 416 completely filled copies of the questionnaire were utilized for the purpose of the study.

Data analysis

The data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed using percentage and frequency counts for demographic information about the respondents. However, hypothesized research questions one and two were tested using regression analysis. Hypothesized research questions three and four were tested with the use of t-test statistical method. All the four hypothesized research questions were tested at 0.05 alpha levels.

RESULTS

The results of the study were presented on the basis of the four hypothesized research questions (RQ) generated for the study.

RQ 1

What is the combined influence of workers' training programmes (Labour relations skill training, Interpersonal treatment skill training, Computer skill training, conflict management skill training and Effective communication skill training) on conflict reduction?

Table 1 shows that all the workers' training programmes (taken together) significantly influenced conflict reduction. All the workers' training programmes account for 35.8% of the total variance in conflict reduction (R Square = 0.358). This implies that the workers' training programmes are very important in ensuring conflict reduction in work organizations.

RQ 2

What is the strength of causation of predictor variables (workers' training programmes) on conflict reduction?

Table 2 revealed that only three independent variables (computer skill training, labour relations skill training and interpersonal treatment skill training) have significantly influenced conflict reduction. However, it was found that management skill, conflict skill and communication skill training programmes were not as significant as labour relations skill, computer skill and interpersonal treatment training programmes in influencing conflict reduction in work organizations.

Table 1. Summary of regression analysis of variance (ANOVA) table on combined influence of all the Workers' Training Programmes on conflict reduction in work organizations.

	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F	P	Remarks
Regression	35.225	6	5.871	10.513	0.000	Significant
Residual	63.100	313	0.558			(p<0.05)
Total	98.325	319				

$R = 0.599$, $R^2 = 0.358$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.324$, standard error = 0.747.

Table 2. Summary of regression analysis table on the strength of causation of predictor variables (Workers' Training Programmes) on conflict reduction in work organization.

Workers' training programmes	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.	Remarks
	B	Std. Error				
Computer skill training	0.354	0.216	0.187	1.634	0.001	*
Management skill training	0.433	0.251	0.238	1.726	0.087	NS
Labour relation skill training	0.858	0.198	0.457	4.334	0.000	*
Conflict management skill training	0.340	0.306	0.145	1.110	0.269	NS
Effective communication skill	0.502	0.353	0.160	1.423	0.158	NS
Interpersonal treatment skill training	0.518	0.219	0.285	2.366	0.002	*

*Significant (P<0.05) NS = Not Significant (P > 0.05).

Table 3. T-test summary on gender differences in workers' training programmes exposure.

Training programmes	Sex	N	Mean	SD	t	P	Remark
Computer skill training	M	163	1.2857	0.4554	-1.660	0.100	NS
	F	157	1.4474	0.5039			
Management skill training	M	163	1.6349	0.4853	1.592	0.115	NS
	F	157	1.4737	0.5060			
Labour relation skill training	M	163	1.3968	0.4932	0.545	0.587	NS
	F	157	1.3421	0.4808			
Conflict management skill training	M	163	1.1746	0.3827	-0.755	0.452	NS
	F	157	1.2368	0.4309			
Effective communication skill training	M	163	1.0635	0.2458	0.222	0.825	NS
	F	157	1.0526	0.2263			
Interpersonal treatment skill training	M	163	1.4286	0.4988	-0.693	0.490	NS
	F	157	1.5000	0.5067			
Both organization types	M	163	1.4762	0.5034	-0.230	0.819	NS
	F	157	1.5000	0.5067			

Degree of freedom (df) = 318, NS= Not Significant (P > 0.05)

RQ 3

Is there any significant gender differences in exposure of employees to workers' training programmes?

Table 3 shows that there is no significant difference between male and female employees exposure to each of the workers' training programmes. The finding revealed that there was no gender discrimination in the selection of workers for both on-the-job and off-the-job training programmes in each of the selected organizations in Nigeria. Also, there was no significant difference in the level of both male and female workers

participation in workers' training programmes in both public and private organizations selected for the study.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study investigated the influence of workers' training programmes on conflict reduction among the workers in work organizations in Nigeria. The finding of the study revealed that workers' training programmes have directly influenced conflict reduction in work organization. Finding further indicates that all workers' training programmes account for 35.8% of the total variance in conflict reduction. This implies that workers' training programmes are very important factors in ensuring industrial peace and harmony among workers in selected work organizations. The finding corroborates Armstrong (1995), Steinmetz (1990), Koehorst and Verhoevon (2002), Keep and Mayhew (1999) and Huselid (1995) who reported a significant relationship between manpower development programmes and reduction in labour turnover and industrial strike.

Moreover, the finding has also revealed the strength of causation of predictor variables (labour relations skill training, computer skill training and interpersonal treatment skill training) on conflict reduction among workers in selected work organizations. The finding tallies with Olaniyi (2006), Ichmowski (1997) and Peterson (2004) who submit that manpower training programmes, especially the communication skill training, labour relations and interpersonal treatment skill training programmes had significantly influenced workers' commitment, cordial interpersonal relations and good placement on the job, since the training programmes cover all aspects of employment relations.

Furthermore, the findings established that computer skill training, labour relations skill training and interpersonal treatment skill training predict conflict reduction among workers in work organizations. It was also found that computer skill training, labour relations skill and interpersonal treatment skill training programmes account for 33.5% of the total variance of the conflict reduction in work organizations. This finding shows that these three variables are inevitable factors to be considered while measuring the influences of workers' training programmes on conflict reduction in selected work organizations. The finding of the study tallies with Johnbul (2001), Peterson (2004), Rita (2004), Akintayo and Babajide (2005) who submit that labour relations and interpersonal skill training programmes have significantly influenced workers' sustainable relationship with the employer. The findings disagree with Reach (1999), Milkman (1997), Zymelman (2000) and Akintayo (1998) who reported that human resource development programmes tend to influence workers job performance effectiveness and could possibly lead to labour turnover resulting from occupational mobility.

The third and fourth hypothesized research questions revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female employees' exposure to each of the workers' training programmes in both public and private organizations selected for the study. This implies that male and female workers were encouraged to undergo the same workers' training programmes in both public and private work organizations without gender discrimination. The findings of the study corroborates Keep and Mayhew (1999), Lesile and Russel (1998), Steinmetz (1990), Koehorst and Verhoevon (2002) and Oloyede (2000) who reported that human resource development programmes tend to foster occupational mobility of workers, sustainability of employer's confidence and preference of both male and female trained workers. The finding implies that there were no significant gender differences in the level of workers participation in workers' training programmes. In essence, both male and female respondents have equal chance of participation in workers' training programmes devoid of gender discrimination in selected work organizations.

Conclusion

The findings of the study established that workers' training programmes have directly influenced conflict reduction. The finding revealed that even in this era of computer age, the human side of the enterprise should not be underrated. The quality of manpower of any organization determines the productivity and profitability of that organization. The findings implies that workers' training programmes are worthy of huge investment especially on the side of the employer. The ultimate dividend is increased productivity, resulting in maximization of profit and therefore enhances industrial peace and harmony. The findings further implies that the employers need to bear the cost of workers' training programmes and should be concerned to ensure that training facilities are modernized and over hauled from time to time in order to foster competitive advantages on the part of the organization itself.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study and bearing in mind the dynamism of Nigerian working environment, it is recommended that:

(1) Workers' training programmes should be given priority by all establishments in order to forestall industrial peace and harmony through reduction in industrial conflict. Also, training needs of the organization as well as that of workers must be identified before making recommendations for training. This will possibly foster specialization and encourage technical-driven training in work organizations.

(2) Workers' training policies should be well defined and be entrenched in the mission statement of all work organizations in Nigeria, in order to foster equity and promotional skill acquisition. The workers` training programmes should be organized for all levels of workers on continuous basis in order to provide opportunity for workers toward updating their skills, improving their performance on the job and virtually sustained their relationship with all levels of workers.

(3) Opportunity for training must be available to all staffers and should be sponsored solely by the management of the organizations. There should not be gender or tribal discrimination in the selection of workers for participation in workers' training programmes. This will definitely ensure organizational goal achievement vis-à-vis conflict reduction in any work organization across the globe.

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