
Communication Styles and Collective Bargaining In Kogi State, Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION

Conflict is inevitable in any industrial setting. As a result, the Industrial Disputes Act 1947 defines an industrial conflict as “any dispute or difference between employers and employers or between employers and workmen, or between workmen and workmen, which is connected with the employment or non-employment or the terms of employment or with the conditions of labour of any person” Thus, industrial conflict is an expression of dissatisfaction within the employment relationship especially those pertaining to the employment contract and the collective bargaining (Gordian, 1998). Meanwhile, labour unionism has been seen over the years as a popular feature of every organization’s workforce, which protects “the rights and interest of employees (Otobo, 1986). Accordingly, Poole (1986) defined a labour unions as an organization of workers who have come together to achieve common goals such as protecting the integrity of its trade, improving safety standards, achieving higher pay and benefits such as health care and retirement, increasing the number of employees that an employer assigns to complete a work, and better working condition.

As a result, the labour union through its leadership bargains with the employer on behalf of members of the union and negotiates labour contracts, through a collective bargaining. This may include the negotiation of wages, work rules, complaint procedures, rules governing hiring, firing and promotion of workers, benefits, workplace safety and policies (Webb, 1920). collective bargaining consists of negotiations between an employer and a group of employees so as to determine the conditions of employment through a collective agreement(Akanji,2005). In this vein, employees are often represented in bargaining by a union or other labor organization.

Meanwhile, the history of industrial actions in Kogi State, Nigeria dates back to the early years of the state. During the tenure of the state’s first democratic governor, Governor Prince Abubakar Audu, industrial conflicts were based on the non-payment of workers’ salaries and entitlements. Similarly, during Governor Ibrahim Idris administration, there were cases of industrial actions in the state which occurred as a result of issues such as wages and other material remuneration; working conditions; job security; working time and; respect and dignity. In this vein, workers in the public sector of the Kogi State government proceeded on an indefinite strike over what was described as an alleged insensitivity of the Governor Ibrahim Idris administration to their welfare.

Captain Idris Wada administration was also not left out of the industrial conflicts in the state. In 2015, teachers in Kogi State threatened to embark on industrial actions over unpaid salaries and entitlements, government’s insensitivity to their plight. The Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT lamented the deliberate and prolonged deprivation of the privileges and rights

of teachers who had continued to offer selfless service to the society and government, even in the face of degradation. In this case, the issues at stake included the non-implementation of 100 percent minimum wage, non-implementation of promotions for the past four years, non-payment of annual leave allowances since 2011, non-implementation of annual incremental steps since 2011, non-payment of December 2014 salary and delay in payment of salaries.

Similarly, the university system in the state was also not excluded from industrial conflicts with government of Kogi state. Accordingly, the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU) and the Non Academic Staff Union (NASU), Kogi State University (KSU) chapter declared an indefinite strike on the 23rd of March 2015 which followed an earlier industrial action embarked by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) of the university, thereby leading to a halt on all academic and non-academic activities in the institution.

Likewise, the non-release of 50.8 billion bailout funds by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to Captain Idris Wada administration made public service workers in Kogi State to stay off work as a way of protesting. Consequently, on the 7th of January 2016, organized Labour unions in Kogi State drew a battle line with the state government by embarking on strike action until their demands are met. Governor Wada claimed that the December 2015 allocation that came into the state was “hijacked” by the banks to settle all outstanding facilities earlier granted to the state and that no bank was ready to offer him loan facilities to augment what was available

Equally, Alhaji Yahaya Bello administration was also welcomed by workers demands and agitations. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Kogi State University issued a 21-Day Ultimatum on the 27th of March 2016 to the state government to pay her members’ five months backlog salaries or face industrial action. In another development, the leaders of organized labour in Kogi state pulled out their representatives in the workers’ screening committee organized by Governor Yahaya Bello due to what it described as antics of the state government to massively downsize the workforce. Labour queried the integrity of the Yahaya Bello-led government on the recently released bailout fund. The leaders asked why the government is yet to come up with the bailout implementation committee as stipulated by the Federal Government and Central Bank of Nigeria. The Labour Unions comprising of Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), Trade Union Congress (TUC) and Public Service Joint Negotiating Council (PSJNC) in Kogi state accused Governor Yahaya Bello of lodging the N20bn bailout received from the Central Bank in a fixed deposit account .

A look into the history of conflicts in Kogi state industrial settings shows that the labour and government are always having distortion in their communication styles. This has prompted accusations and industrial actions in the state. As a result, literatures on communication as a concepts are replete. Thus, studies from Saphiere, Mikk, and DeVries(2005) defined communication as “the exchange, transmission, or sending and receiving of thoughts and messages. In this vein, to communicate requires an interchange of verbal and verbal messages, Accordingly, communication is simply the act of transferring information from one place to another through the process of using words, sounds, signs, or behaviors to express or exchange information or to express your ideas, thoughts, feelings, etc., to someone else (Vivyan,2005). It is thus expected that receivers of messages must provide feedback on how they have understood the messages send by the sender through both verbal and non-verbal reactions (Clark, 2011).. Communication is a purposeful activity of exchanging

information and meaning across space and time using various technical or natural means, whichever is available or preferred (Harper, 2013). The information conveyed can include facts, ideas, concepts, opinions, beliefs, attitudes, instructions and even emotions. Communication requires that the communicating parties share an area of communicative commonality.

As a result, communication style is the way in which we communicate a pattern of verbal and nonverbal behaviors that comprises our preferred ways of giving and receiving information in a specific situation (Saphiere, Mikk, and DeVrie,2005). According to UK Violence Intervention and Prevention Center(n.d), communication style may be passive, aggressive, passive aggressive and assertive. In this vein, passive communication style is when individuals have developed a pattern of avoiding and expressing their opinions or feelings, protecting their rights (Alberti, Robert E., and Michael L. Emmons,2001). Furthermore, passive communication involves putting personal needs last and thus ensuring a win – lose outcome. In addition, aggressive communication style is when individuals express their feelings, opinions and advocate for their needs in a way that violates the rights of others. Consequently aggressive communication style displays verbal and/or physical abuse. As a result, aggressive communication is a win- lose (Vivyan,2005). Moreover, assertive communication style is when individuals clearly state their opinions and feelings, and firmly advocates for their rights and needs without violating the rights of other. Assertive communication style is a win- win outcomes (Paterson, Randy J, 2000)

It is against this background that this study will examine communication styles used for collective bargaining by labour unions in Kogi State.

METHODOLOGY

This study covers the members of labour unions in Kogi State The study adopted descriptive design and purposive sampling of respondents The population of the study includes Local Government Employees, school teachers in both primary and secondary schools in Kogi State. This study made use of both primary and secondary sources of data. In this vein, the primary sources of data involve issuing out questionnaires to a group of selected personnel which are local government employees, primary and secondary school teachers. The secondary sources of data include information retrieved from journals, books, and materials from the internet. The Likert questionnaire rating of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) are assigned values of 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively. The decisions on the degree of agreement are based on a cut-off of 2.5 mathematically evaluated

Analysis of Collective Bargaining level in Kogi state

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total
The state government has successfully managed industrial crises in Kogi State.	19(12%)	43(27%)	77(48%)	20(13%)	159(100%)
The labour unions and Kogi State government have successfully reached peace agreements concerning industrial crises in Kogi State.	17(11%)	35(22%)	62(39%)	45(28%)	159(100%)
Negotiations by both parties have been successful.	79(50%)	40(25%)	26(16%)	14(9%)	159(100%)
There are programmes and initiatives implemented to address industrial conflicts in the state	16(10%)	48(30%)	59(37%)	36(23%)	159(100%)

Source: Field Survey 2016

The above table shows that the state government has successfully managed industrial crises in Kogi State .19 respondents (12%) strongly agreed to the statement, and 43 of the respondents (27%) agreed with the statement, while 77 respondents (48%) disagreed to the statement and 20 respondents (13%) strongly disagreed with the statement. The greater percentage from the above table is 61% from the disagreeing side which is greater than the agreeing side of 39%. Thus, the survey shows that the state government has not successfully managed industrial crises in Kogi State.

The statement which says that “the labour unions and Kogi State government have successfully reached peace agreements concerning industrial crises in Kogi State had 17 of the respondents (11%) with strongly agreed opinions, and 35 of the respondents (22%) agreeing with the statement, while 62 of the respondents (38%) disagreed to the statement, and 45 of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. The greater percentage from the two sides is 67% from the disagreeing side while the total percentage from the agreeing side is 33%. Thus, we can conclude that the Kogi State government has not successfully reached peace agreements concerning industrial crises in Kogi State.

The statement which says that negotiations carried out by both parties have been successful had 79 of the respondents (50%) strongly agreeing to the statement, 40 of the respondents (25%) agreeing with the statement, while 26 of the respondents (16%) disagreed to the statement and 14 of the respondents (9%), strongly disagreed with the statement. The greater total percentage between the two sides is 75% from the agreeing side while the total percentage from the disagreeing side is 25%. This strongly implies that the negotiations that have been carried out by both parties have been successful.

The statement which says that there are programmes and initiatives implemented to address industrial conflicts in the state shows that from the agreeing side, 16 of the respondents (10%) strongly agreed to the statement, and 48 of the respondents (30%) agreed with the statement, while from the disagreeing side, 59 of the respondents (37%) disagreed, and 36 of the respondents (23%) strongly disagreed with the statement. The greater percentage from the

two sides is 60%, from the disagreeing side while the total percentage from the agreeing side is 40%. This means that the respondents are of the view that there are no programmes and initiatives implemented to address industrial conflicts in the state.

Showing the Collective Bargaining

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total
The Kogi State government goes beyond its power to meet the needs of the labour so as to reduce the impact of industrial conflict.	21(14%)	34(21%)	55(34%)	49(31%)	159(100%)
The state government is ready to accept the terms given by the labour union so as to end or reduce impact of industrial actions.	25(16%)	51(32%)	64(40%)	19(12%)	159(100%)

Source: Field Survey 2016

From the table above, it can be said that most of the respondents say that the Kogi State government goes beyond its power to meet the needs of the labour so as to reduce the impact of industrial conflict. In this case, 21 of the respondents (14%) strongly agreed with statement and 34 respondents which represent 21% agreed with the statement, while from the disagreeing side 55 of the respondents which constitute 34% disagreed, and 49 of the respondents which are 31% of population, strongly disagreed with the statement. The side with the greater percentage is the disagreeing side with a total of 65%, while the total percentage of the disagreement side is 35%.

Likewise, the statement which says that “the state government is ready to accept the terms given by the labour union so as to end or reduce impact of industrial actions had 117 respondents who were 74% of the population strongly agreeing, and 35 respondents, that is 22% agreed with the statement from the agreeing side, while from the disagreeing side, only 7 respondents which is 4% of the population that disagreed with the statement. The side with the higher total percentage is the agreeing side with a total of 96%, while the disagreeing side has only a total of 4%. Therefore, we can say that the state government is willing to grant the requests of the labour union so as to reach peaceful agreements.

Analysis of Communication Style

Aggressive communication style

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total
The labour unions are involved in protests and other industrial actions in fighting for their rights against the government	89(56%)	41(26%)	29(18%)	-	159(100%)
There have been a lot of propaganda between the labour union and Kogi state government against each other.	64(40%)	57(36%)	23(15%)	15(9%)	159(100%)
Strike by the labour has proven to be very effective in drawing the attention of the state government.	118(74%)	41(26%)	-	-	159(100%)

Source: Field Survey 2016

From the table above, 89 of the respondents which constitute 56% have a strongly agreed opinion on the statement that says that “the labour unions are involved in protests and other industrial actions in fighting for their rights”. Also, 41 respondents which forms 26% of respondents agreed with the statement from the agreeing side, while from the disagreeing side, only 18 of the respondents, that is 11% disagreed with the statement. The side with the greater percentage is the agreeing side with a total of 82%, while the total percentage of the disagreement side is 18%. Therefore, it can be said that most of the respondents agree that the labour are involved in protests to address conflicting issues very often in Kogi State.

From the table above, 64 of the respondents (40%) of the population strongly agreed that there have been a lot of propaganda between labour and the Kogi State government and 57 respondents, which constitute 36% agreed with the statement from the agreeing side, while from the disagreeing side 23 of the respondents (15%) disagree, and 15 of the respondents which are 9% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. The side with the greater percentage is the agreeing side with a total of 76%, while the total percentage of the disagreement side is 24%. Therefore, it can be seen that majority of the respondents agree that there has been a lot of propaganda between labour and the Kogi State government.

From the table above which says that “strike by the labour has proven to be very effective in drawing the attention of the state government” had 118 respondents having a strongly agree opinions and 41 respondents agreed with the statement. The agreeing side here obviously has the greater percentage advantage having a total of 100% as none of the respondents disagree with the statement. Thus, it can be said that all the respondents agree that strike by labour has proven to be very effective in drawing the attention of the state government. By and large, there is aggressive and assertive communication style in Kogi state.

Showing the Passive Communication Style

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total
The state government tends to ignore salient issues that concern labour in Kogi State.	18(11%)	91(57%)	37(23%)	13(9%)	159(100%)
Labour and the Kogi state government often deny rift between themselves.	-	31(19%)	103(65%)	25(16%)	159(100%)
The Kogi State government sidesteps conflicting issues concerning labour in Kogi State.	110(69%)	30(19%)	19(12%)	-	159(100%)

Source: Field Survey 2016

From the item which says that “the state government tends to ignore salient issues that concern labour in Kogi state”, 18 of the respondents which constitute 11% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement, and 91 respondents, that is 57% agreed with the statement from the agreeing side, 37 respondents, that is 23% of respondents disagreed, and 13 of the respondents, which are of 9% population strongly disagreed with the statement. The greater percentage between the two sides is 68% from the agreeing side, while the total percentage from the disagreement side is 32%. This implies that majority of the respondents support the notion that the government tends to ignore salient issues that concern labour in Kogi State.

The statement which says that the labour and Kogi state government often deny rifts between themselves had 31 respondents, that is 19% agreeing with the statement, while from the disagreeing side 103 respondents (65%) disagreed, and 25 of the respondents (16%) strongly disagree with the statement. This means that the labour and Kogi state government do not deny rift between themselves. the table above shows the responses to a statement that says that “the Kogi State government sidesteps conflicting issues concerning labour in Kogi state”, In this vein, 110 respondents strongly agreed, that is 69% of the population and 30 respondents, which is 19% agree with the statement. On the other hand, it can be seen that 19 (12%) respondents disagreed with the statement . The side with the greater percentage is the agreement side which has a total of 88% while the disagreement side has just a total of 12%. This means that the Kogi State government sidesteps conflicting issues concerning labour in Kogi State. Moreover, there is passive communication style between government and labour unions in Kogi state.

Showing the Assertive Communication Style

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total
The Kogi State government goes beyond its power to meet the needs of the labour so as to reduce the impact of industrial conflict.	21(14%)	34(21%)	55(34%)	49(31%)	159(100%)
The state government is ready to cancel or postpone other projects so as to fully concentrate on the needs of the labour union.	20(13%)	64(40%)	46(29%)	29(18%)	159(100%)
The state government is ready to reach peaceful agreements with the labour union irrespective of what has to be done to accomplish this.	132(83%)	15(9%)	12(8%)	-	159(100%)
The state government is ready to accept the terms given by the labour union so as to end or reduce impact of industrial actions.	25(16%)	51(32%)	64(40%)	19(12%)	159(100%)
The state government is willing to grant the requests of the labour union so as to reach peaceful agreements.	117(74%)	35(22%)	7(4%)	-	159(100%)

Source: Field Survey 2016

From the table above, 21 of the respondents (14%) strongly agreed to the statement and 34 respondents (21%) agree dwith the statement from the agreeing side, while from the disagreeing side 55 of the respondents (34%) disagreed, and 49 of the respondents (31%) strongly disagreed with the statement. The side with the greater percentage is the disagreeing side with a total of 65%, while the total percentage of the disagreement side is 35%. It can be said that most of the respondents say that the Kogi State government goes beyond its power to meet the needs of the labour so as to reduce the impact of industrial conflict.

From the table above, 20 of the respondents (13%) strongly agreed and 64 respondents (40%) agreed with the statement from the agreeing side, while from the disagreeing side 46 of the respondents (29%) disagree, and 29 of the respondents (18%) strongly disagree with the statement. The side with the greater percentage is the agreeing side with a total of 53%, while the total percentage of the disagreement side is 47%. Thus, it can be said that most of the respondents say that the state government is ready to cancel or postpone other projects so as to fully concentrate on the needs of the labour union.

The table above shows that 132 respondents (83%) strongly agree, and 15 respondents (9%) agree with the statement from the agreeing side, while from the disagreeing side, only 12 respondents disagree with the statement and none of the respondents strongly disagree with the statement. The side with the higher total percentage is the agreeing side with a total of 92%, while the disagreeing side has only a total of 8%. Therefore, we can say a large number of respondents say that the state government is ready to reach peaceful agreements with the labour union irrespective of what has to be done to accomplish this.

From the table above, 25 of the respondents (16%) strongly agree and 51 respondents (32%) agree with the statement from the agreeing side, while from the disagreeing side 64 of the respondents (40%) disagree, and 19 of the respondents (12%) strongly disagree with the statement. The side with the greater percentage is the disagreeing side with a total of 52%, while the total percentage of the agreement side is 48%. Therefore, we can see that most of the respondents do not affirm that the state government is ready to accept the terms given by the labour so as to end or reduce the impact of industrial actions.

The table above shows that 117 respondents (74%) strongly agree, and 35 respondents (22%) agree with the statement from the agreeing side, while from the disagreeing side, only 7 respondents (4%) disagree with the statement and none of the respondents strongly disagree with the statement. The side with the higher total percentage is the agreeing side with a total of 96%, while the disagreeing side has only a total of 4%. Therefore, we can say that the state government is willing to grant the requests of the labour union so as to reach peaceful agreements.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The survey shows that many of the respondents affirm that the state government has not successfully managed industrial crises in Kogi State. This has confirmed Ademoyega (2003), which says that most of the industrial crises that have taken place in the country were not properly or fully managed by the government as elements or traces of the root causes are not fully addressed which has the tendency to lead to reoccurrence of such a conflict. Thus, due to the nature of events and happenings in Kogi State related to issues of industrial conflict and the overt tensions surrounding it, it can actually be said that the state government has not fully eradicated or managed industrial crises in Kogi State. The survey shows that labour unions and Kogi State government have not successfully reached peace agreements concerning industrial crises in Kogi State although negotiations by both parties have been successful and most of the respondents are of the view that there are no overt programmes and initiatives implemented to address industrial conflict in the state. Akanji (2005) has shown that once the presented requests to be met by a party in conflict, which if met, will lead to the demise of the conflict, are not put in to considerations or are not attended to, there

is a very little or no chance of the resolution of such a conflict. From the survey, it can be said that the state government tends to ignore salient issues that concern labour in Kogi State. In this vein, Akpala (1993) is of the view that when a group of people in a particular geographical area, directly or indirectly raised up issues that are seen as problems to them, and these are not immediately attended, there is a very high possibility that such an issue can lead to a dispute that could have been prevented earlier.

It could be seen from the findings on passive communication that Kogi state government and labour union have developed a pattern of avoiding and expressing their opinions. This has made grievances and annoyances to mount. However, once the behaviour has reached their high tolerance threshold for unacceptable behavior, manifestation of assertive and aggressive communication style becomes imminent. In this vein, being aggressive whether on the part of government or labour union in Kogi state has always been characterized with the parties establishing one's rights in a way that violates or ignores the rights of others and getting their own way at other people's expense. This aggressive behaviour has often been expressed through protest and propaganda often involving intimidation. Conversely, there is usage of Assertive communication styles which is usually defined as standing up for your own rights without dismissing on the rights of others. In this case, both the government and labour union are involved in joint problem solving in order to ensure sustainable peace and industrial harmony in Kogi state.

The three communication styles (passive, assertive and aggressive) are more prevalent in the collective bargaining strategies between labour and Kogi state government. The implication of this is that there is a pattern of avoidance (Passive, win – lose outcome). In addition, aggressive communication style is expressed in a way that violates the rights of others and ensuring win –lose outcome and assertive communication style ensures a joint problem solving between the parties (win- win outcome).

It is therefore recommended that the parties (Kogi state government and labour union) must work on their communication styles in order to ensure industrial harmony.

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