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SOCIAL DIALOGUE AND WORKING CONDITIONS: EVIDENCE FROM PERFETTI BANMETTELLE NIGERIA LIMITED AGBARA, OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The increasing need for improved working conditions has made social dialogue expedient in organization. This study examined the effect of social dialogue on working conditions in the manufacturing industry. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design using Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination formula, a sample size of one hundred and fifty-two (152) was derived. The copies of the questionnaire were administered with the help of some of the organization employees. One hundred and twenty-one (121) copies of the questionnaire were duly completed and thirty-one (31) were not returned. Three hypotheses were formulated and tested using inferential statistical tool. The result revealed that a significant relationship exists between negotiation, information sharing and working conditions and that they both account for 3.2% of working conditions. The study recommended that management of organizations should see social dialogue as a means of generating consensus, for improving workers' working conditions and ultimately enhancing organizational performance.

Keywords: Information Sharing, Negotiation, Nigeria, Social Dialogue, Working Conditions, Work-Life Balance

1. Introduction

The debate on the role of social dialogue in business organization as it affects workers condition in the world of work has been renewed following the economic crisis of 2008 (Grimshaw *et al.* 2018). Social dialogue has become a well-established instrument which is now been practiced

intensively on a daily basis across the world and has been the topic of a growing set of studies worldwide. According to the International Labour Organization (2014), social dialogue includes all types of negotiation consultation and information sharing among representatives of government, employers and workers on issue of common interest relating to economic and social policy. Social dialogue is ILO's best mechanism in promoting better living and working conditions as well as social justice. It is an instrument of good governance in various areas and its relevance is not just related to the process of globalization but in general to any effort to make the economy more performing and more competitive as well as to make society in general more stable and more equitable.

Broughton *et al.* (2016) opine that social dialogue through established employee representation structures contributes to the development of increased communication cooperation and commitment to improved working conditions. Consultation and participation of workers is central to the introduction of measures to encourage improvement in healthy and safety, work life balance, organization of work and work activities, training of workers among others. According to ILO (2014), management by agreement is preferable to management by dictatorship, negotiation is more democratic than unilateral imposition. Hence, social dialogue is the most appropriate means of regulating, employment relations a principle, which has been widely reasserted.

Social dialogue covers tripartite processes and institutions of social dialogue such as social and economic councils, like trade unions and employers organization and processes such as collective bargaining, autonomous independent and strong workers as well as employers' organization, are criteria for effective social dialogue and improved working conditions in the world of work (International Labour Conference, 2012). Eurofound (2011) posits that the quality of social dialogue is determined by the extent to which the social partners are able to negotiate collective agreement that govern terms and conditions of employment and regulate labor relations. It is against this background that this study investigates the link between social dialogue and working conditions using Perffetti Ban Mentelle Nigeria Limited.

The increasing need for improved working conditions has made social dialogue expedient in the manufacturing industry. The unfavorable conditions of work in some sectors, such as health and safety, working time, work – life-balance, organization of work and work activities, have made social dialogue important and crucial for improving working conditions and organizational performance. The lack of commitment of Nigerian employers to social dialogue and their failure to imbibe the culture of social dialogue in the workplace has affected negatively the protection and promotion of workers interest at work, which is responsible for the incessant industrial dispute.

Social dialogue is practiced intensively across the world and has been the topic of a growing set of studies worldwide, which is well tested and documented especially regarding industrial relations in developed economies, but this is much less the case for developing economies like Nigeria, where roles are still emerging in which social dialogue can optimally contribute to the work environment and working condition of employees in this sector (Hermans and Ongealle, 2016).

Previous studies (Hyman, 2010; Eurofound, 2014, Larsen and Mailand, 2018) have been carried out to investigate the relationship between social dialogue and working conditions but most of the studies were carried out in the developed economies and in other sectors aside manufacturing. There is little evidence that researchers have examined the effect of social dialogue as a form of negotiation mechanism for improving working conditions in Nigerian organizations, most of the studies carried out in developed economies are qualitative studies, which relied on secondary data as stated above.

As work environment becomes more complex and unstable, a wide range of preconditions were identified by International Labour Organization (2014) for strengthening social dialogue ranging from effective information and consultation a conducive regulatory framework, dispute settlement system and necessary negotiation structure as well as basic rights of workers representatives. Therefore, social dialogue and working conditions calls for concern in order to promote industrial harmony, enhance organizational competitiveness and workers' wellbeing. It is against this background that this study raises the following research

questions and hypotheses on social dialogue and working conditions in the manufacturing sector.

The main objective is to examine the effect of social dialogue on working conditions. Other specific objectives are to examine the effect of negotiation on occupational health and safety, to determine the effect of Information sharing on work-life balance, and to investigate the joint effect of negotiation and information sharing on working conditions. Research questions are what is the effect of negotiation on occupational health and safety? To what extent would information sharing affect work-life balance? What is the joint effect of negotiation and information sharing on working conditions?

The hypotheses developed for this study are shown below:

H₀₁: Negotiation has no significant effect on occupational health and safety.

H₀₂: Information sharing has no significant effect on work-life balance.

H₀₃: There is no significant joint effect of negotiation and information sharing on working conditions.

2. Literature review

2.1. Social dialogue

Social dialogue is defined by the International Labour Organization to include all types of negotiation, consultation or simply exchange of information between or among representatives of governments, employers and workers on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy. Social dialogue is International Labour Organization's best mechanism in promoting better living and working conditions, as well as social justice. Social dialogue is an invaluable mechanism for the design of policies to fit industrial priorities. Furthermore, it is a strong basis for building the commitment of employers and workers to the joint action, which government needed to overcome the crisis and for sustainable recovery (ILO, 2013). Social dialogue, in its most diffuse and general usage, seems little more than other term for industrial relations involving collective bargaining and other means of pursuing agreement between employers and representatives of workers (Eurofound, 2009). In a second meaning, it is distinguished from collective bargaining, indicating an exchange of information and viewpoints which may ultimately facilitate successful negotiation but is not itself negotiation process. It indicates a particular institutional configuration designed to encourage consensual or positive – sum interaction, similarly, it may denote a normative orientation towards social partnership and the avoidance of conflict. Summarily, the meaning of social dialogue seems to vary cross – nationally.

The exact role and position of different forms of social dialogue consultation, joint agreement, bargaining negotiation very much depends on the specific national labor relations background (e.g. constituent role of collective bargaining in the Nordic model the German or Austria notion of social partnership or a still very much state central model in France (Eurofound, 2009).

The function of negotiation denotes the traditional terrain of industrial relations narrowly conceived, the bilateral bargaining relationship between union and employers. This has both a procedural dimension (enabling employee participation and managing conflict) and a substantive one (distributing gains, improving conditions and work organization) (Cerisier, 2015).

The function of regulation represents a trilateral relationship with government defining a social space for interest representation elaborating the rules of the game, and controlling the rules of the game and controlling labor market competition (Gabaglio, 2010). The third functions cohesion is more diffuse. It includes involvement in the management of social welfare.

Institutions are integrating workers within the society and increasing the legitimacy of social economic model. Social cohesion might seem to imply that social dialogue generates social consensus. However, it has been argued, that reality is more complex, what seems to emerge from analysis of successful initiatives in social dialogue is that the core basis of effectiveness is not so much consensus as trust. There is need to develop a mutual

understanding between the interlocutors in which each can appreciate the concerns and objectives of the others without abandoning the commitment to protect and advance (Fox and Flanders, 1969).

2.2. Working conditions

According to Eurofound (2009), working conditions have to do with the working environment and the non-pay aspects of an employee's terms and conditions of employment. This includes areas such as health safety and wellbeing, working time and work – life balance, organization of work and work activities, training skills and employability. Thus, for this study working conditions would be measured using health and safety, and work life balance.

2.3. Work life balance

As result of the changes in the work place over the years, it becomes imperative for a balance between an employee's work and personal life. According to Foley (2007), work - life balance is the extent to which employees perceive they are experiencing positive relationship between their work and family roles.

Maxwell (2015) posits that work – life balance is about adjusting working patterns regardless of age, race or gender so that everyone can find rhythm to help combine work with their other responsibilities or aspirations. This definition addresses work - life balance issue today as concerning each and every of us and is not only limited to women. The issue has become universal. Also, the nature of work life balance does not only concern working fewer hours, it has become more multifaceted. According to Maxwell (2015), work-life balance includes the following issues: how long people work (flexibility in the number of hours worked), when people work (flexibility in the arrangement of hours), where people work (flexibility in the place of work), developing people through training so that they can manage the balance better, providing back – up support breaks from work, work – life balance is achieved when an individual's right to a fulfilled life inside and outside paid work is accepted and respected as the norms to the mutual benefit of the individual, business and society.

2.4. Health and safety

Health and safety practices are continuous methods of improving health and safety that tries to minimize the effects of occupational accidents (Zanko and Dawson, 2012). Health and safety practices incorporate all initiatives that are directly or indirectly involved in making the workplace safe for the employees.

Ganster *et al.* (2018) opine that workplace health and safety initiatives perform a great role in the reduction of work – related accidents or diseases, which could have severe direct and indirect consequences on the lives of workers and their families. Health and safety policies are required of the employers to create and keep up to date, a written declaration of safety policy except in very small firms of fewer than five employees. Methods for preventing and control of work-related hazards in the work place should be established on a link Perfect Implementation and well-defined policy at the level of the organization (Foot and Hook, 2008).

Therefore, employees health and safety policy symbolize the groundwork for which safety and health objectives and performance measures and components are developed. Workplace health and safety initiatives such as occupational health surveillance, establishment of health and safety policies, health and safety audits, health and safety training, establishment of a health and safety committee, employee wellness program can be introduced in the work environment with the aim of reducing occupational hazards.

2.5. Theoretical review

The theories reviewed include Herzberg two factors theory by Herzberg (1964), and The human relations approach by Mayo (1923). Herzberg (1964) perfected a theory of work motivation,

which he conducted. His ideas were to discover what motivate employees and to ascertain what they actually want in the work and requested workers to narrate to him occasions when they found their job exceptionally good or bad. According to Herzberg (1964), intrinsic factors tend to motivate while the extrinsic factors are hygiene factors that keep an employee from being dissatisfied, they are not satisfiers. Herzberg (1964) opines that intrinsic and extrinsic factors may be divided into two, namely: motivators, and hygiene factors. The motivators are the intrinsic factors, which determine or increase job satisfaction and motivate workers. They are recognition, achievement, work itself, responsibility, and individual growth.

The hygiene factors are extrinsic factors which are element whose absence or inadequate in a job produced dissatisfaction. They are associated with the work context (work setting). They relate more to the environment in which people work than to the nature of work itself. Improving the hygiene factor will not motivate the workers; it will only prevent them from being dissatisfied. They include organizational policies, quality of supervision, physical working conditions, salary, and relationship with peers.

Mayo's studies in the Hawthorne plant of the Western electric company from 1927-1932 led to this approach. However, the Hawthorne experiments were originally designed to test the effect of physical working conditions such as illumination, lighting, temperature and work schedules on workers productivity (Mayo, 1923). The conclusions and contributions of the Hawthorne studies on human relations movement are as follows:

- i. Greater productivity can be achieved by strengthening the work groups rather than merely directing management attention to the individual as an isolated member of the organization.
- ii. It is not economic rationality or financial incentives and rewards, which strictly determines human behavior and output rather group dynamics and norms and the human desire to associate to fulfill his social and emotional needs are the main determinant of human action and the productivity of individual workers.
- iii. An employee is most influenced by the people he or she works with. Thus, group production standards are much more important than management of wage incentive in affecting individual output.
- iv. Special attention given to workers by management increases productivity regardless of actual changes in working conditions. This is known as the Hawthorne effect.

2.6. Recommendations of human relations approach

The humanization of technology organization structure and job design using the principles of job enlargement, decentralization, loose organization, human emphasis flexible procedure positive environment people orientation among others. SA combination of the informal organization structure and the formal authority. An increase in welfare schemes and recreational facilities.

The human relations theory is relevant to this study because the theory stipulates that people are social beings motivated by social needs and that workers are more receptive to social forces of peer groups than monetary incentives and management control. The theory also concludes that workers respond positively to attention from management, workers and customers. The psychological needs of individuals significantly impact group performance.

The study reviewed two theories that are relevant to this research work. Herzberg two factor theory was adopted to provide explanatory framework because Herzberg requested workers to narrate to him occasions when they found their job exceptionally good or bad. His idea was to discover what motivates them and what they actually want in their work. Herzberg (1964) identified physical work conditions, which has to do with work environment as hygiene factor that keeps an employee from being dissatisfied.

2.7. Empirical review

Several empirical studies have been carried out to examine the effect of social dialogue on working conditions for instance, in a study by Hyman (2010) on social dialogue and industrial

relations during the economic crisis: Innovative practices or business as usual, the study revealed that social dialogue is the most appropriate means of regulating employment relations, a principle which has been widely reasserted especially in times of heightened social tension. The study further established that social dialogue is an invaluable mechanism for the design of policies to fit national priorities, and a strong basis for building the commitment of employers and workers to the joint action. It also revealed that the European social dialogue is acknowledged as an essential component of the European model of society and development.

The European social dialogue alongside European social legislation are regarded as driving forces for successful social reforms, in which they perceive social dialogue as a means of generating consensus, among employers' workers and the government. Also, Eurofound (2011) revealed that in a recent review of working conditions in Europe notable improvements are evident such as the reduction in accidents in the work place, but other dimensions of job quality have not really improved, such as access to training opportunities at the same time, there seems to be a deterioration in areas such as work intensity. Increased pressure in the context of globalization and market integration resulting in an acceleration of downsizing and outsourcing and other forms of restructuring at company level, these and other trends have negative effects on the quality of jobs and working conditions as the quality of jobs and working conditions as stated in the recent report of employment reports in Europe.

Hayter and Stoevska's (2011) study on social dialogue indicators revealed that the quality of social dialogue is determining by the extent to which the social partners are able to negotiate collective agreements that govern terms and conditions of employment and regulate labor relations. The study posits that the emphasis is therefore on primary industrial relations indicators, that is membership of organizations and the coverage of collective bargaining agreements.

Eurofound's (2014) study on social dialogue in micro and small companies investigated industrial relations and social dialogue in micro and small companies, the research was based on various informational sources including on the topic; a comparative evaluation of contributions from twenty eight (28) national correspondents and ten (10) case studies of good practice in micro and small companies. The study revealed the specific features of industrial relations in micro and small companies, highlighting the important role of informal relationship between owners' managers and employees and the lack of formalized structures and practices of interest representation and social dialogue, collective bargaining coverage and collective representation in general. The findings further revealed that while the majority of the European Union countries, twenty two (22) out of twenty eight (28), have established regulations on workplace interest representation and formal structure of social dialogue that also include micro and small companies, the incidence of formal social dialogue structures in companies with fewer than fifty (50) employees is generally low. However, nevertheless the coverage of micro and small companies in collective bargaining agreement is higher although this is heavily determined by the degree of centralization of national bargaining systems.

In a study conducted by Hermans and Ongevalle (2016) on social dialogue and sustainable development goals, the study revealed that social dialogue is itself a form of governance that provide specific advantages towards realizing sustainable development. These advantages are linked to the inclusive nature and the way interaction is organized. The study also revealed that for social dialogue to have a positive effect on the realization of sustainable development, an enabling environment is essential, characterized by the will of parties to engage in a dialogue and the supporting role of the state. The study, however, identifies how social dialogue contributes to five key dimensions of sustainable development: (i) working conditions, workers right and equality of work, (ii) access to public services and redistribution, (iii) growth and innovation, (iv) environment and climate, and (v) governance and participation.

Grimshaw *et al.* (2018) carried out a study on social dialogue and economic performance and revealed that social dialogue is a pillar of responsible business conduct which is based on freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining including through institutional and regulatory frameworks, which is considered essential for achieving effective, equitable and mutually beneficial outcomes for governments employers, workers and the wide

society. The study further revealed that social dialogue has also been crucial to resolve cases filled by trade unions and meaningful results have been achieved.

3. Methodology

In view of the nature and scope of this study, this research is limited to Perfetti Ban Mettelle Nigeria limited Agbara Ogun State, the company was chosen for convenience and availability of data. The population of the study consists of 250 permanent employees, a sample size of one hundred and fifty-two (152) was derived using Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination formula. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The validity of the research instrument was ascertained by experts in measurement and evaluation from the department of industrial relations and human resource management. The instrument was pilot tested using test re-test method and the reliability coefficient 0.75 was obtained. Data were collected through questionnaire.

The questionnaire was formatted on a 4-point Likert scale while systematic sampling technique was used, this was done with the help of the human resource manager who gave access to their register. The copies of the questionnaire were administered with the help of the human resource manager. One hundred and fifty-two copies of the questionnaire were administered and one hundred and twenty-one (121) were duly completed and returned while 31 were not returned. The study made use of regression in analyzing data using SPSS (24.0) version.

4. Data analysis and presentation

This section deals with the test of hypotheses using the regression model. the regression model will assist this study to determine the level of variance between the variables. The formulated hypotheses are stated below:

H₀₁: Negotiation has no significant effect on occupational health and safety.

H₀₂: Information sharing has no significant effect on work-life balance.

H₀₃: There is no significant joint effect of negotiation and information sharing on working conditions.

Table 1. Regression model result

Variables	B	Beta	t	F	Sig.
Constant	3.031		15.795	2.207	0.000**
Negotiation	0.099	0.135	1.485		0.003**
R ²	0.018				

Note: *, ** and *** represent 10%, 5% and 1% significance level respectively.

Table 1 shows that R² was able to explain 1.8% of the variation in health and safety (R² = 0.018), which is brought about by negotiation. This indicates the statistically significant of the regression model run, which points out that the dependent variable significantly predicts the outcome variable F (1,120) = 2.207, p = < (0.05). The β-value (0.135) shows that for every 1-unit increase in the predictor variable, dependent variable will increase by 0.135. Based on the outcome of this analysis, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The next regression model presents the interlink between information sharing and work-life balance.

Table 2. Regression model result

Variables	B	Beta	t	F	Sig.
Constant	3.555		18.351	1.771	0.000**
Information Sharing	-0.090	-0.121	-1.331		0.016**
R ²	0.015				

Note: *, ** and *** represent 10%, 5% and 1% significance level respectively.

The result of the regression model as shown in Table 2 indicated that the independent variable (information sharing) was able to predict 1.5% of the variation in the dependent variable (work-life balance) ($R^2 = 0.015$). However, the negative coefficient of the β -value (-0.121) shows that for every 1 – unit increase in the predictor variable, the dependent variables will decrease by - 0.121. This implies that there is an inverse relationship between information sharing and work-life balance. The F statistics reveals $F(1,120) = 1.771$, $p < 0.05$. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The joint effect of negotiation and information sharing on working conditions is validated by the third hypothesis.

Table 3. Regression model result

Variables	B	Beta	t	F	Sig.
Constant	3.279		12.091	1.941	0.000**
Negotiation	0.096	0.131	1.447		
Information Sharing	-0.087	-0.117	-1.290		0.043**
R ²	0.032				

Note: *, ** and *** represent 10%, 5% and 1% significance level respectively.

The regression output from Table 3 shows that the model was able to explain 3.2% variation in the dependent variable ($R^2 = 0.032$). The R^2 (0.032) shows that 3.2% variation in working conditions is brought about by negotiation and information sharing. However, there is an inverse relationship between information sharing and the criteria variable working conditions, but negotiation contributed to working conditions. The result showed the following data weights, which represented the relative contribution of the two independent variable to the prediction. Negotiation $\beta = 0.131$, $t = 1.447$; information sharing $\beta = -0.117$, $t = -1.290$. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The study revealed that there is a 13.5% relationship between negotiation and occupational health and safety. It also revealed that negotiation account for 1.8% of occupational health and safety. The study further indicates that negotiation is statistically significant to working conditions the result corroborates with previous studies (Eurofound, 2014; Hyman, 2010) that found a significant relationship between social dialogue and working conditions. The result of H_2 shows that there is an inverse relationship between information sharing and work-life balance, the result corroborates with a study carried out by Turker (2017), who found an inverse relationship between informational support and work-life balance. The p values of the three hypotheses tested are $P = 0.003$, $P = 0.016$, $P = 0.008$, $P < 0.05$ level of significance, as a result the three null hypotheses were rejected and the alternative accepted.

5. Conclusion

The study has been able to establish that social dialogue (Negotiation and information sharing) has an effect on working conditions in Perfetti Ban Mettelle Nigeria limited, Agbara, Ogun State. The study further revealed that the indicators identified in this study are good measures of the independent variable and dependent variable. Therefore, management of organizations should

engage in all types of social dialogue with their employees to enable them improve on their working conditions.

Thus, it can be concluded that when organization engages in continuous social dialogue with their employees, it would improve working conditions and enhance the performance of employees. Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from this study, the following recommendations were made: Employers should consult with representatives of their employees, when critical decisions that bother workers welfare are to be deliberated on. Management and employees should see social dialogue as a means of generating consensus to improve workers' working conditions and ultimately enhance organizational performance.

This study has been able to contribute to knowledge by providing empirical evidence on social dialogue and working conditions in the manufacturing sector, most of the studies conducted on social dialogue and working conditions made use of secondary data. The study suggests that further empirical studies should be conducted on social dialogue and working conditions in the public sector using other indicators of working conditions as identified by Eurofound (2011).

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