

Harmonizing the Employment Relationship for Sustainable Organizational and Personal Development

Abiodun Adekunle Ogunola

Department of Psychology, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Nigeria.

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Abstract

For most people working in one organization or the other, work connotes more than just the payment of salaries and incentives. To many it connotes a deeper meaning that conveys psychological tenets of status, esteem, and relevance in the society. In discussing the underlying components to this is the notion of a psychological contract whose suggestion was that between the employer and employee there exists an implicit contractual relationship derived from a series of assumptions on the part of the employee and employer about the nature of their relationship. An organization is by creation an avenue that holds a group of individuals with different characteristics, and as such achieving a working environment devoid of grudges and grievances is quite difficult. Industrial harmony is not the absence of disagreement, but it is when there is an understanding between employers and employees that permits the system to achieve its set goals. It is therefore important to ascertain that in human settings like working organizations, grievances that lead to industrial strife is normal. The paper therefore sets out to give an understanding of the employment relationship and how it could be effectively and conscientiously harmonized for the sustainable all-round development of the employee and the overall development of the organization for which he or she works.

Keywords: Conflict, Esteem, Harmony, Relationship, Status

Introduction

People are multifaceted and complex. They have needs to acquire, the dominant view of economist, but they also have needs to bond with others, to learn and grow, and to defend their self-esteem.²⁰ While people join organizations with a mix of these needs, organizations are capable of reshaping their relative salience and strengths through selection and socialization.

People make the organizations. They are livewire of any organization. It is thus in the best interest of managers, directors, and employers alike to ensure that they create an ambience wherein they can get the best out of their employees. Employees have diverse needs and expectations when they enter into an organization. Some of them are contractual, some are contingent on the climate and culture

of the organization, some are psychological, while some exist in the heads and consciousness of the employees. They wish that their organizations are able to meet these needs which include but are not limited to job security, training and development, self-actualization, interpersonal relationship, effective supervision, conducive working conditions etc. that makes them feel like they truly belong to that organization.

Organizations are complex open systems that adapt and cope to survive and prosper. Successful adaptation requires an effective exchange with the environment. An organization exists at the instance of the efforts of both the employer and the employees who are the prime movers of the operational activities of the entity. The two parties, therefore, co-exist and interact in the course of the day-to-day operations of the organization. The above scenario

E-mail Id: psychabiodun@gmail.com

Orcid Id: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6120-2026>

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in the workplace implies that there is defined relationship between the employer and the employees. As such, the two parties in the organization engage in formal relationship, which is purely for operational purposes which could be channelled for the sustainable organizational and personal development of the employee and the employer.

Who relates with who?

Everyone who derives an income through work or who becomes involved in the organization and management of employees at work is involved in an employment relationship. This relationship is about the interaction of people and organizations at work. It is concerned with how individuals, groups, organizations and institutions make decisions that shape or regulate the relationship between employers and employees.⁸

Fundamentally, the nature of relationship between the employer and the employee is the contract of employment. The employers and the employees are normally brought together by virtue of the understanding that there exists a contractual relationship between them. In essence, the action of the employer in offering employment constitutes an invitation to the relationship, while the acceptance of the offer by the new employee thus brings both parties into the relationship by the issuance of appointment letters, terms and conditions of service, rules and regulations of the organization, and the conduct of the induction exercise. The implication of such relationship between the employer and the employee is that there is always an agreement that is legally binding and enforceable on the basis of which the latter party accepts to work for the former.³

An approach that a psychologist would be pushing for in this day and age is seen as more development conscious with a humanistic focus based on clear statements about the worth of employees to the organization and ethical matters related to the employment relationship. In this approach, employees are seen as active partners rather than passive inputs and core assets especially in creativity and innovation. It also views employees as participants in a venture built on commitment, communication and collaboration. The collaborative emphasis is characterized by efforts to create and communicate a culture of partnership between the employer and employees and among employees in the workplace. An organization practicing a soft approach to managing its human resources would be expected to stress the importance of employee commitment, self-regulation and a broad degree of self-control. The focus is on individual development, lifetime training and individual freedom.¹¹

In order to achieve the objectives of an organization of economic development through industrial development, industrial harmony is very important. On one side of the divide are employees who wish to be satisfied with their wages, hours of work, working conditions, welfare

facilities, etc. On the other side are the employers or management who wish to be satisfied with employees' work performance and the profits they are able to realize from all their ventures. The aims and objectives of both the employees and employers usually go towards the opposite directions. Therefore, the dispute between these two automatically occurs and spoils the industrial peace which will finally lead to major waste and economic loss to the society as a whole as well as themselves.³⁷

Harmonious relationship between employees and employers determines industrial peace. The relationship between the workers and employers must be good. In order for an organization to enjoy rapid industrialization and overall development as well as for the employees who work in these organizations to enjoy sustainable personal development, industrial peace and harmony is a basic requirement.¹⁷

For an average working-class adult, work represents more than an avenue to make ends meet, to keep body and soul together, to maintain personal and family survival, it connotes an avenue that serves psychological needs of achieving status, belongingness, and esteem as well as a point of showing responsibility within the society. Hence going to work is an avenue through which an individual seeks personal development both in the short term and long term. Therefore, having a job that has the capacity to offer this is not only essential but a desirable place to work in and commit one's energy, resources and skills to.

For an organization, it seeks development through the combined efforts of those who work for it through their performances and outputs. There is a strong competitive advantage if an organization is able to pool together the energies of its employees for a sustainable organizational development. There is a saying that "a single broom stick cannot sweep a floor but a whole bunch will be able to sweep a floor clean". There is strength in numbers and this helps the organization to achieve its set goals and objectives.

What is Industrial Harmony?

Industrial/organizational harmony refers to a friendly and cooperative agreement on working relationships between employers and employees for their mutual benefit (Ladan, 2012). According to Puttapalli AK and Vuram IR, industrial/organizational harmony is concerned with the relationship between management and employees with respect to the terms and conditions of employment and the work place.²⁷

Bassey AO et al. also refer industrial harmony to "a state of relative peace in any industrial organization, which involves; absence of strikes, and distrust among work groups or unions, peaceful relationship between unions and management of the organization, as well as

employee positive perception of his or her contribution as participant not as subject within the organization".⁵ Industrial harmony is a very critical factor of organizational productivity and performance. Industrial harmony in its ideal form, presupposes an industry in a condition of relative equilibrium where relationship between individuals and or groups are cordial and productive.

In effect, it is a situation where employees and management cooperate willingly in pursuit of the organization's aims and objectives. Akpoyovwaire SM in his paper stated that industrial harmony requires that²:

- All management personnel understand their responsibilities and what is required of them, and have the training and authority necessary to discharge such duties and responsibilities efficiently
- Duties and responsibilities for each group of employees are stated with clarity and simplicity in the organizational structure
- Individual employees or work-groups know their objectives and are regularly kept informed of progress made towards achieving them
- There is an effective link in the interchange of information and views between senior management and members of the work group
- Supervisors are briefed about innovation and changes before they occur so they can explain management's policies and intentions to the work-group
- Employers cooperate with trade unions in establishing effective procedures for the negotiation of terms and conditions of employment and for the settlement of disputes
- Employers encourage the establishment of effective procedures among member organizations for the settlement of grievances and disputes at the level of the establishment or undertaking
- Employers take all reasonable steps to ensure the organization observes agreements and agreed upon procedures
- The organization maintains a communication system which secures the interchange of information and views between different levels in the organization and ensures that employees are systematically and regularly kept informed, factually and objectively, of changes and progress in the system

Industrial/organizational harmony thus covers four broad areas of cooperation: responsibilities, employment policy, collective bargaining, and communication and consultation. Industrial/organizational enhances labour productivity and in turn improves performance in the education sector, achieving economic growth, and enhancing living standards and quality of life. It creates a peaceful working environment conducive to tolerance, dialogue and other alternative (to strike) means of resolving industrial/labour disputes

in Nigeria (such as negotiation, mediation, arbitration, conciliation and litigation or court adjudication).¹⁹ This creates a high level of employee satisfaction.

Industry today is neither viewed as a venture of employers alone nor is profit considered as its sole objective. It is considered to be a venture based on purposeful cooperation between management and labour in the process of production and maximum social good is regarded as its ultimate end and both management and employees contribute in their own way towards its success. Similarly, labour today is no more an unorganized mass of ignorant workers ready to obey without resentment or protest the arbitrary and discretionary dictates of management. The management has to deal with employees today not as individuals but also as members of organized social groups who are very much conscious about their rights and have substantial bargaining strength. Hence, the objective of evolving and maintaining sound industrial relations is not only to find out ways and means to solve conflicts or to resolve differences, but also to secure the cooperation among the employees in the conduct of such industry.³¹

The gathering of men and women today into the various industries, organizations, offices, and other workspaces today is not just for the purpose of making profit alone. They are considered investments of people on both sides of the negotiation table i.e. the employer and the employees to the common good of either of the parties in the employment relationship. These days employees no longer feel that they are in any organization to collect their own piece of the largesse being thrown around but as contributors and partners to the success story, growth and accomplishment of the organization both in the present state and in the long-term projections.

It is therefore important for both parties to maintain and consistently improve on the level of relationship, understanding, and mutual cooperation that they currently share and are willing to create. In maintaining this sort of relationship, there are bound to be conflicts of interests, agitations, resentments, bickerings and others which lead to differences of opinions, ideologies, and standpoints. They thus find ways of resolving their differences – in the event it does happen and hope to ensure that the organization enjoys a steady growth and a positive atmosphere that encourages comfort and stability.

What if the Harmonious Relationship Goes Wrong?

The manner in which the individual employee and the organization may seek for their respective development may differ; hence conflict may arise resulting in disharmony within the organization. Basically, the issue is that people from different background, different culture, orientation, and belief coming together to work and relate together and

thus some fall in as employees or as employers. As such there must be rules guiding the relationship and where there are rules, there must be conflict. There are therefore always two parties to every issue and in organizations there is a bearer of power while the other party will be a non-bearer of power. There is bound to feelings of oppression, marginalization, and consequently disagreement. This leads to industrial conflict.

Conflict exists in the workplace as it does in many other parts of life. Conflict is inevitable in labour-management relations, but without cooperation based upon an ideology that makes it possible to develop constructive industrial relations, the marvels of modern technology and industrialization may lead to disaster.

Wherever humans gather, there are bound to be conflicts, the workplace is no exemption. So long as people hold different opinions, one party is going to nurse the thought that the other is out to cheat him or manipulate the conditions in any part of the agreement. Also, as business technologies, information and communication technologies, and other manufacturing technologies emerge, individual workers feel that their position and relevance to the organization will wane as these changes occur, hence they will feel agitated.

Organizational conflict is the discord that occurs when the goals, interests or values of different individuals or groups are incompatible and those individuals or groups block or frustrate each other's attempt to achieve their objectives. Conflict is an inevitable part of organizational life since the goals of different stakeholders such as managers and staff are often incompatible.¹⁶

Fajana A defined industrial conflict as "the inability of the employers and employees to reach agreement on any issue connected with the subject of employers-employees' interactions".¹² He however pointed out that many discussions on industrial relation and conflict management simply refer to strike because it is the most overt and significant aspect of industrial conflict. Kreitner R and Kinicki A define conflict as "a process which one party perceives that its interest is being opposed or negatively affected by another party's action".¹⁸

Ogunbameru OA and Oribabor P agreed that industrial conflicts occur whenever clash of interests and objectives exist in worker-management relations.²³ Industrial conflict is expressed in different terms such as warning strikes, lockouts, strike action, industrial unrest, industrial disharmony, trade dispute, industrial dispute, etc.¹ All these are concepts which express the existence of unhealthy relationship between key actors in an industrial setting.²³ Bagshaw M notes that conflict is a fact of life, in organizations as well as other areas of life, as people compete for jobs, resources, power, acknowledgment

and security; dealing with it is difficult because it arouses primitive emotions such as people feeling threatened.⁴

Industrial conflicts are the results of several socio-economic, psychological and political factors. Various lines of thoughts have been expressed and approaches used to explain this complex phenomenon. Bhagoliwal TN observes that an economist tries to interpret industrial conflict in terms of impersonal markets forces and laws of supply demand.⁷ To a politician, industrial conflict is a war of different ideologies - perhaps a class-war. To a psychologist, industrial conflict means the conflicting interests, aspirations, goals, motives and perceptions of different groups of individuals, operating within and reacting to a given socio-economic and political environment".

Jones GR, Gorge JM, Hill CWL, are of the view that there are four types of conflict namely, interpersonal conflict, intragroup conflict intergroup conflict and interorganizational conflict.¹⁵

- **Interpersonal Conflict:** This is the conflict between individual members of an organization, and it occurs because of individual differences in goals and values.
- **Intra-group Conflict:** This is the conflict that arises within a group, team, or department.
- **Inter-group Conflict:** This is the conflict that occurs between groups, teams or departments.
- **Inter-organizational Conflict:** This is the conflict that arises across organizations. Sometimes, Inter-organizational conflict may arise when a manager in one organization feel that another manager of a certain organization is not behaving ethically and his actions are threatening the wellbeing of some stakeholder groups of his organization.

So what causes conflict in organizations?

The causes of industrial conflict or disputes have been much varied. These may be described as partly psychological, partly social, and partly political, but predominantly economic. Some important factors responsible for industrial conflict and poor industrial relations according to Daver RS are briefly stated as follows¹⁰:

- Management's general apathetic attitude towards workers or employees because of their contention that they want more and more economic or monetary rewards and want to do less work.
- Mental inertia on the part of both management and labour.
- Lack of proper fixation of wages in conformity with cost of living and a reasonable wage structure generally.
- Bad working conditions.
- Attempts by management to introduce changes (such as rationalization, modernization or automation) without creating a favourable to appropriate climate

or environment for the same.

- Lack of competence or training on the part of first-line supervisors as well management at upper levels in the practice of human relations.
- Assignment of unduly heavy workloads to workers
- Unfair labour practices (such as victimization or undue dismissal).
- Lack of strong and healthy trade unionism, lack of a proper policy of union recognition and inter-union rivalries.
- A spirit of non-cooperation and a general tendency among employees to criticize or oppose managerial policies or decisions even when they may be in the right directions.
- A fall in the standard of discipline among employees largely due to wrong or improper leadership, often resulting in insubordination or disobedience on the part of employees.
- Difference in regard to sharing the gains of increased productivity.
- Inadequate collective bargaining agreements.
- Legal complexities in the industrial relations machinery or settlement of industrial disputes.
- Lack of necessary changes in the working of government in accordance with changing needs and circumstances.
- Combination of too much law and too little respect for law even at high levels.
- Growing factional and personal difference among rank-and-file employees who are union members or union leaders and a tendency on the part of the management in some cases to prefer having relations with union leaders outside the organization and not giving due respect to the leaders of the workers within.
- Political environment of the country.
- Agitation and wrong propaganda by selfish labour leaders to further their own interests of their own party.

An organization is an avenue that holds a group of individuals with different backgrounds and characteristics, and as such, achieving an environment devoid of grudges and grievances is quite difficult. Industrial harmony is not the absence of disagreement, but it is when there is an understanding between employers and employees that permits the system to achieve set goals. Onasanya SAB views grievance as a discontent or dissatisfaction, real or alleged, valid or imaginary and whether expressed or not but arising from matters connected with employment of workers which the workers perceived to be unjust and unfair, no matter whether they are right or wrong.²⁴ A grievance may not necessarily affect the system in achieving set goal until it snowballs into a conflict. This is corroborated by Njoku IA and Nwosu N who averred that in a human setting like the organizations, grievances that lead to industrial strife is normal.²¹ What must be recognized is the attitude that exists towards grievances. If they are

interpreted as differences that are inevitable and capable of resolution, they can be regarded as healthy manifestation of an industrial democracy.

Is there a Psychological Contract in the Employment Relationship?

The term employment relationship describes the relationship which exists between employer and employees at work, these relationships can be formal, as employment contracts or agreements or informal proceedings, such as the psychological contract which expresses certain expectations both from the employees and the employer. Psychological contract has been defined as “an individual’s beliefs regarding the terms of conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between the focal person and another party”.²⁸ Rousseau further describes it as “an individual’s beliefs about the terms of the exchange agreement between employee and employer. It concerns the idea of an exchange between parties.

Individuals enter employment with a set of beliefs, expectations and obligations, which they anticipate being met by their employer. In addition, the employer holds a reciprocal set of beliefs, expectations and obligations thus putting an abstracted binding exchange in place. Additionally, it is important to note that the psychological contract does not involve items found in the employment contract. Instead of objective and defined promises, it concerns more implicit, subjective and malleable ones.

Schein’s suggestion was that between employer and employee there exist an implicit contractual relationship which is derived from a series of assumptions on the part of employer and employee about the nature of their relationship. These assumptions may not be legally enforceable but they constitute a set of reciprocal arrangements and form the basis for a series of expectations that may have a considerable degree of moral force.²⁷

The main assumptions according to Schein are that:

- Employees will be treated fairly and honestly
- The relationship will be characterised by a concern for equity and justice and this will require the communication of sufficient information about changes and developments
- Employee loyalty to the employer will be reciprocated with a degree of employment and job security
- Employees’ input will be recognised and valued by the employer

Underlying this notion of a psychological contract we can also detect assumptions about what people look for in terms of returns and satisfactions from work and, indeed, there is an element of prescription in that Schein can be interpreted as specifying the way in which employees

should be treated. This model of a psychological contract, where fulfilled, provided the means for employees to derive intrinsic as well as extrinsic satisfactions and rewards from their work.

The psychological contract is perceptual, unwritten, and hence not necessarily shared by the other party to the exchange. Consequently, employees and employers may hold different views on the content of the psychological contract and the degree to which each party has fulfilled the mutual obligations of the exchange. Furthermore, the creation of a psychological contract may result from implicit means relying on an individual's interpretation of actions and events within an organization. Thus, two employees hired at the same tie into the same positions may develop idiosyncratic interpretations of their psychological contract. The focus on perceived obligations is to be made distinct from expectations. The importance of distinguishing between the two concepts lie in their consequences whereby, in theory, violation of obligations should (if there is a clear difference) produce a more intense and organizationally detrimental response than expectations.

Therefore, all employment contracts are in a sense temporary obligation, as they take up only a limited part of our time. However, the period of time spent in a certain employment and its daily time demands can differ; the length of one's contract to the same employer, and the hours worked during a day, in other words, can vary. Generally speaking, the employment terms and conditions of a given assignment can be rather heterogeneous today. It therefore means that it is in an employment contract that there could be violations, which could result in penalties, sanctions, and even outright termination of employment.

The notion of a psychological contract has been extended in recent years to encompass a wider range of expectations of both parties to the relationship; these, to some extent, can be perceived not only as expectations but also as the respective interests of the parties. Gennard J and Judge G, in discussing the psychological contract and employees' and employers' interests, suggest that, in addition to a reward package representing the monetary and extrinsic aspect of the relationship, employees may have the following expectations¹⁴:

- Security of employment
- Social relations and sociable atmosphere
- Potential for advancement
- Access to training and development
- To be treated as a human being rather than as a commodity
- Job satisfaction and empowerment regarding their job
- Family-friendly work-life balance conditions of work
- Fair and consistent treatment
- Some influence over their day-to-day operations but

also at a policy level (often the term 'voice' is used in this context).

They also suggest that, in return for the reward package offered, employers have the following implicit expectations of employees:

- functional, task flexibility
- minimum standards of competence
- a willingness to change
- ability to work as a member of a team
- commitment to achieving organizational objectives
- capability to take initiative
- the talent to give discretionary effort

Communication of contract content is key. If both parties know what the other expects from them, obligations and promises can be easily recalled and performed. It is important that there is consistency and structure with HR and management frameworks in order for constructive communication to flow. Considering and communicating employee-employer expectations are vital requirements for achieving fulfilled psychological contracts and corresponding vibrant and effective employees. If not only for reducing turnover and inciting valuable staff member, considering the psychological contract will likely have positive influence on staff mentalities, welfare and overall happiness. And after all, working towards improving anyone's happiness could never be considered a bad day's work.⁹

Using Social Exchange Theory as an Analysis

Social exchange theory is a psychological and sociological perspective theory that explains social change and stability as a process of negotiated exchanges between parties. Social exchange theory posits that human relationships are formed by the use of a subjective cost-benefit analysis and the comparison of alternatives. Social exchange theory was introduced in 1958 by the sociologist George Homans with the publication of his work "Social Behaviour as Exchange". He defined social exchange as the exchange of activity, tangible or intangible, and more or less rewarding or costly, between at least two persons. After Homans founded the theory, other theorists continued to write about it, particularly Blau PM and. Emerson RM, who in addition to Homans, are generally thought of as the major developers of the exchange perspective.

Self-interest and interdependence are central properties of social exchange. These are the basic forms of interaction when two or more actors have something of value to each other, and they have to decide whether to exchange and in what amounts. Homans uses the concepts of individualism to explain exchange processes. To him, the meaning of individual self-interest is a combination of economic and psychological needs. Fulfilling self-interest is often common

within the economic realm of the social exchange theory where competition and greed can be common. In social exchange, self-interest is not a negative thing; rather, when self-interest is recognized, it will act as the guiding force of interpersonal relationships for the advancement of both parties' self-interests.

Social exchange theory views exchange as a social behaviour that may result in both economic and social outcomes. Social Exchange Theory has been generally analysed by comparing human interactions with the marketplace. Simple social exchange models assume that rewards and costs drive relationship decisions. Both parties in a social exchange take responsibility for one another and depend on each other. The elements of relational life include: costs, rewards, and worth.

Costs are the elements of relational life that have negative value to a person, such as the effort put into a relationship and the negatives of a partner. (Costs can be time, money, effort etc.)

Rewards are the elements of a relationship that have positive value. (Rewards can be sense of acceptance, support, and companionship etc.) As with everything dealing with the social exchange theory, it has as its outcome satisfaction and dependence of relationships. The social exchange perspective argues that people calculate the overall worth of a particular relationship by subtracting its costs from the rewards it provides.

Worth = Rewards – Costs

If worth is a positive number, it is a positive relationship. On the contrary, a negative number indicates a negative relationship. The worth of a relationship influences its outcome, or whether people will continue with a relationship or terminate it. Positive relationships are expected to endure, whereas negative relationships will probably terminate. In a mutually beneficial exchange, each party supplies the wants of the other party at lower cost to self than the value of the resources the other party provides.

Assumptions of the Social Exchange Theory³²

Social exchange theory is based upon several assumptions about human nature and the nature of relationships. An analysis of the nature of the employment relationship between employees and employers will be drawn up here:

Assumption 1: Humans seek rewards and avoid punishments

The understanding here is that for an employee to enter into a work relationship, he/she would have carefully reviewed how to seek and maximize rewards and try as

much as possible to avoid punishments. The individual makes a cost-benefit analysis to ensure that the work he/she is doing brings more rewards than punishment and if by any chance the punishments in the workplace (e.g. suspension, withholding of salary, hazards, etc) are unavoidable, they should be kept to the barest minimum.

Assumption 2: Humans are rational beings

By this assumption, it is meant that human beings are capable of reasoning out issues and making decisions they seem best on any situation they find themselves. It opines that an individual may not decide about his/her work necessarily because other employees around him/her have made such decisions. It means no matter how hasty, hurriedly or poorly thought up a work process may be created, it is within the grasp of each employee to think out the modalities of going about his/her job by evaluating the best possible decision to make in such scenarios.

Assumption 3: The standards that humans use to evaluate costs and rewards vary from time to time and from person to person:

This drives home the individuality of each employee that even in the midst of a sea of employees (metaphorically speaking) an individual employee is still of independent mind and judgment. Consider a scenario as an example here. A commercial bank comes into an establishment and is canvassing for its employees to subscribe to its loan facilities. For the diverse employees present, each of them has wide-ranging reasons why to either opt in or decline the proposed loan. Whatever reasons anyone chooses (e.g. buying a car, building a house, completing an on-going project, paying children's school fees, or funding a business) is entirely personal and the standards for which each person evaluates the costs and rewards of the said loan varies based on several personal and organizational reasons.

Assumption 4: Relationships are Interdependent

Relationships whether between two or more employees or between the employees and the employers are interdependent. One party needs the other party for the relationship to function effectively. In a healthy relationship, it is not about competition, not about outsmarting or outwitting the other person but about how to collectively make everyone in that relationship grow and develop to a sustainable height and also get the desired rewards for being part of such relationships. Outcomes in an interdependent relationship are based on a combination of parties' efforts and mutual and complementary arrangements.

Assumption 5: Relational life is a process

For any relationship to bring rewards to its parties, it has

to be viewed as a process, one in which all parties take conscientious efforts to develop and nurture over a period of time. There has to be a commitment on the part of all parties to see it as a process which will take some time to mature so as to function and for it to generate the desired rewards for all concerned. For a relationship to be mutually benefitting, it has to go through certain sequential steps wherein everyone in the relationship size up their character, expectations, desires, relational patterns and subsequently the rewards they get from the relationship. Drawing an analogy here, in our Nigerian culture, it is nearly impossible for a man to meet a girl for the first time and ask her to marry him without first knowing some details about the girl in question. Therefore, relationships in life – whether work, social, religious, family, etc. is a process, one which must be worked at by all members of such relationship for its success.

In drawing this analysis, an understanding is key of the psychological needs that entering into, staying in, and maintaining relationships in life fulfil for individuals. There are feelings of acceptance, belongingness, warmth, friendship, camaraderie, comradeship, support and inner peace when individuals find themselves in relationships that are mutually benefitting to all concerned wherein the rewards of such relationships far outweighs the costs of being a member.

All the above point to the fact that in an industrial setting, it does appear as that an employee and employer are in a form of social exchange in which the quality and quality of their relationship is a central figure of whatever results that relationship brings to either party. Humans need relationships to exist and survive and they seek such healthy relationship in their workplace.

Maintaining Industrial Harmony for Sustainable Organizational development

Employers/Management play vital roles in harmonising the workforce. An approach they can take may start from individual development in order to culminate into organizational development. Need-based skills and behavioural development of an individual is a positive attitude towards engendering internal industrial harmony. It is important for employers to focus their attention on the worth of the employees. Employers must value their employees as a vital part of the organization's framework and not just a desperate bunch of people on the other side of the bargaining table.

One of the most important aspects of this relationship is to maintain industrial peace and thereby increase productivity. On a personal level for the employee, if you have an organization that encourages internal peace, that can guarantee you to speak your mind at all times and that would also respect your opinions, such organization would

naturally command your utmost productivity. Even in the physical life, a relationship (e.g. with a father, mother, friends or relatives) that offers peace is one to be nurtured and that demands a strong commitment. On the union level, rather than resolving to strikes by unions, good industrial relations means averting strikes through proactive interaction with the employers. Productivity is an important area in which harmonious relations becomes significant because the more employees are happy about the goings in their organization, the more productive they would be for the organization. It is the highly competitive area of global business, and so maintaining high productivity is important for the survival of organizations.

Harmony in organizations thus connotes an industrial environment where workers along with their union and management understand and accept each other as partners in progress; that a cooperative attitude is mutually beneficial in terms of output, performance and rewards. It does not assume that conflicts do not exist but that effective and proactive collective agreements and grievance procedure exist that can prevent the conflicts from transforming into a crisis. Thus, internalizing harmonious industrial relations will eliminate poor management as it relates to human resources management.⁶

In the Nigerian environment, many problems enterprises face result from executives, managers, and employees who exhibit specific attitudes and behaviour patterns which are inimical to industrial harmony and thus create a state of mistrust, misinformation, and disharmony. When there is mutual trust and oneness of purpose by all concerned in an organization then the workers and even the management may willingly forgo certain rights and privileges as a result of any austerity measures aimed at restoring the organization to the right path or direction for the benefit of all and the overall good of the people, investors and stakeholders.

Furthermore, Osamwonyi F and Ugiagbe EO asserted that in the area of goal setting and recognition, management should begin to think or ask to what extent their methods of rewards and goal setting actively promote mutual trust and collaboration as against management by objectives, individual payment by result or appraisal systems.²⁵ Management will demonstrate its recognition of individual contributions by its commitment to change traditional practices and procedures for more dynamic and rewarding practice. Peer recognition is a powerful motivator, which provides self-esteem and confidence and should be encouraged along with mutual respect of each other. Good management that has earned employees' trust, openness, workers' participation in planning and management, fair remuneration, informed participants in the industrial relation system, good collective agreements, adequate and realistic productivity agreement are important for the sustained growth of the organization. It is impossible

for an industry to progress without the cooperation of all concerned in an atmosphere of harmonious relationships. Therefore, it is in the interest of all to create and maintain good and acceptable relations between employees and employers.

Maintenance of harmonious employer-employee relations is one vital importance for the survival and growth of the enterprise. Good industrial relations result in increased efficiency and hence prosperity, reduced turnover and other tangible benefits to the organization. Daver RS identifies the following as the importance of such relationship¹⁰:

- **It establishes industrial democracy:** Industrial relations means settling employees' problems through collective bargaining, mutual cooperation and mutual agreement amongst the parties i.e. management and employees' unions. This helps in establishing industrial democracy in the organization which motivates them to contribute their best to the growth and prosperity of the organization.
- **It contributes to economic growth and development:** Harmonious employer-employee relationship leads to increased efficiency and hence higher productivity and income. This will result in the development of the economy of the organization as well as the sector of the economy they belong to.
- **It improves morale of the workforce:** Harmonious employer-employee relationship, built-in mutual cooperation and common agreed approach motivate one to contribute one's best, results in higher productivity and hence income, gives more job satisfaction and helps to improve the morale of the workers.
- **It ensures optimum use of scarce resources:** Good and harmonious industrial relations create a sense of belongingness and group cohesiveness among workers, and also a congenial environment resulting in less industrial unrest, grievances and disputes. This will ensure optimum use of resources, both human and materials, eliminating all types of wastage.
- **It discourages unfair practices on the part of both management and unions:** Industrial relations involve setting up machinery to solve problems confronted by management and employees through mutual agreement to which both these parties are bound. This results in banning of the unfair practices being used by employers or trade unions.
- **It prompts enactment of sound labour legislation:** Industrial relations necessitate passing of certain labour laws to protect and promote the welfare of labour and safeguard interests of all the parties against unfair means or practices.
- **It facilitates change:** Harmonious employer-employee relationship helps in improvement of cooperation, team work, performance and productivity and hence

in taking full advantages of modern inventions, innovations and other scientific and technological advances. It helps the work force to adjust them to change easily and quickly.

Industrial Harmony for Sustainable Personal development

A person's personal development (work and otherwise) is based on the amount of peace, harmony and stability he is able to enjoy from the work he commits his physical, psychological, mental and emotional life to. It goes a long way in defining who an individual employee is and will be for the number of years he so wishes to stay on that job. The driving energy in this personal development is the abstracted psychological contract that employees assume should be fulfilled when they enter work. The underlying assumption here is that once an employee is fulfilled or feels his/her expectations are being met or are likely to be met, focusing and ultimately achieving personal development would be relatively easier than imagined. Once an employee feels safe and secure at work, developing himself/herself or being developed by the organization through training and development and other organizational means would be achieved through industrial harmony.

The personal characteristics of workers, their culture, educational attainments, qualifications, skills, attitude, towards work, etc. play an important role in industrial relations. The relationship an individual employee has with other employees and his/her employers is heavily reliant on those characteristics and how well both parties work well with those characteristics. Workers' organizations, known as trade unions, can also fulfil these for the employee. Trade unions are formed for safeguarding the economic and social interests of the workers. They put pressure on the management for the achievement of these objectives of fair and consistent treatment as well as industrial harmony.

The harmonious relationship between employees and employers is a critical determinant for the realization of organizational goals. Based on the contractual relationship between the workforce and management, both parties are expected to meet the conditions stated in the employment contract. If this relationship is well established and sustained, there will be good job performance that will engender continuous and improved productivity level whereby interests of individual employees, the management of the organization, the investors and shareholders will be favoured and positively attended to.

Fashoyin T. maintains that many cases that lead to employee grievances are associated with poor communication in the labour-management relationship.¹³ This creates acrimony and distrust. Workers should not be denied information and management should not show lukewarm attitude towards information dissemination. Managers and/or administrators

must be well versed in communication theory and practice if they are to enable employee access and understanding thereby promoting harmonious relationships between management and staff and among the staff themselves.

Good employee-employer relations suggest that there is absence of industrial disputes between the two parties and presence of understanding and cooperation between them. Thus, industrial relations in an organization must be harmonious or cordial. Such relationship is significant for the employees for the following benefits:

- **Higher Productivity:** Due to cordial industrial relations, workers take interest in their jobs and work efficiently. This leads to higher productivity and production of the enterprise where they are working. Thus, they will contribute to the economic growth of the nation. The higher the performance and productivity of the employees, the higher the performance of the organization as a whole.
- **Industrial Democracy:** Sound industrial relations are based on consultation between the workers and the management. This assists in the establishment of industrial democracy in the organization which motivates employees to contribute their best to the success of the organization.
- **Collective Bargaining:** Cordial industrial relations are extremely helpful for entering into long-term agreements as regards various issues between labour and management. Such collective bargaining agreements and association of employees in decision-making process will bring about cooperation between labour and management.
- **Fair Benefits to Workers:** The workers should get sufficient economic and non-economic benefits to lead a happy life. It is possible when the relations between workers and management are cordial and the productivity is high. The employers can afford higher benefits to the workers.
- **Higher Morale:** Good industrial relations imply the existence of an atmosphere of mutual co-operation, confidence, and respect within the enterprise. In such an atmosphere, there are common goals, which motivate all members of the organization to contribute their best.

Therefore, the management has a significant role to play in maintaining smooth harmonious relations. For a positive improvement in their relations with employees and maintaining sound human relations in the organization, the management must treat employees with dignity and respect. Employees should be given 'say' in the affairs of the organization generally and wherever possible, in the decision-making process as well. A participative and permissive attitude on the part of management tends to give an employee a feeling that he is an important member

of the organization - a feeling that encourages a spirit of cooperativeness and dedication to work.

- Management must make genuine efforts to provide congenial work environment.
- They must make the employees feel that they are genuinely interested in their personal development. To this end, adequate opportunities for appropriate programmes of training and development should be provided.
- Managements must delegate authority to their employees commensurate with responsibility.
- They must evolve well-conceived and scientific wage and salary plan so that the employees may receive just compensation for their efforts. They must devise, develop and implement a proper incentive plan for personnel at all levels in the organization.
- There must be a well-planned communication system in the organization to pass on information and to get feedback from the employees.
- Managements must pay personal attention to the problems of their employees irrespective of the fact whether they arise out of job environment or they are of personal nature.
- They must evolve, establish and utilize appropriate machineries for speedy redress of employees' grievances.
- Managements must provide an enlightened leadership to the people in the organization.

An environment of mutual respect, confidence, goodwill and understanding on the part of both management and employees in the exercise of their rights and performance of their duties should prevail for maintaining good industrial relations.

Conclusion

Employees come to the organization with a set of expectations they desire to be fulfilled by their employers and also the organization have expectations from the employees. The pooling together of the energies of employees is especially significant for the organization. The maintenance of the harmonious employment relationship is vital and important for the growth and development of the economy, the sustainable personal development of the employees and the overall development of the organizations. Where there are people, there are bound to be frictions and disagreements, and where there are disagreements, conflicts will arise. Conflict in organizations is not necessarily an evil or the absence of peace. If, however, conflict cannot be avoided, it should be managed and minimized so as to ensure that there is harmony in the organization. It is therefore in the best interest of all concerned that the employment relationship is harmonized.

Conflict of Interest: None

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