

## **Industrial Relations Practices in Rivers State: The Views of Three Host Communities**

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### **Abstract**

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**I**ndustrial relations practices require the demand on the part of the publicist to foresee emerging conflict, communicate same and represent existing organization's interest and as well analyze human industrial issues as required by common sense and ethics. Perpetual outbreak of conflicts, whether between the management and her internal publics or striving communities remains that the industrial relation officer is incompetent. The paper then intends to investigate into the efficiency role of industrial practice from three selected companies in Rivers State. Three communities were employed to this effect, thus Aluu, Choba and Alakahia. Result shown through the use of Linkert's scaling method, revealed that the issue of dishonesty; follow-up and availability of industrial relation officers accounts for the continual outbreak of conflict. It then remains, the paper concludes, that conflicting communities can be rid of crisis if the companies so wish, thus by strategically positioning their industrial relations offers.

**Keywords:** *Industrial relations practice, Host communities*

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### **Background to the Study**

Industrial relations practice demands the functions of a trained publicist, it ranges from that of problem identification, feedbacking between an existing organization and the host community, open communication on human interest issues; representations of the organizations in litigation matters and all such issues that will require collective bargaining.

It then follows the industrial or community peace is solely the role of the industrial manager. As the name implies, he is required to mediate between the management and the employees. In Nicole (2018) this probably is why some scholars refer to it as employee-relations. For one issue with industrial relations have the tendency to affect an entire economy. What then remains is that an effective organization practice demands the impart of a well-trained publicity (Adeyeye, 2001, 1995, Faj, 2000). Going by this then, the continual conflicts between companies and their host communities in Rivers State, calls for the paper. For one again, if it is in the duty of the industrial relation manager to foresee conflicts and check them, it probably means that most of the companies with conflict tone are not really practicing.

The paper researched on three communities in view to seeing if the global roles of the individual relations managers are being felt by these communities. Conflict rate in most communities will be greatly checked if indeed the companies are making use of the services of industrial relations managers. For sure many of these companies have industrial relations unit, but not according to practice. As argued by Nicole (2018) organizations are productive in their host communities when the services of good industrial relations are instantly improved in cases where practitioners perform below global expertise. As well, employees' non-chalance to work can greatly reduce when good work relations exist. Employees would be encouraged as well the external publics of the company. The paper then avers that the continual conflict between companies and their host communities and sometimes between the internal publics and the management is the cause of the industrial relations manager. The argument that the local chiefs or the youths of the communities or the employees are ingrate and could be conflict involving is not always the case (Adeyeye, 1995; Fashoyin, 1980).

In a work published by Westfordadmin (2016), besides other roles of the industrial relations managers, there is most importantly the role of labour and customer relation management. The latter requires the place of honesty in transactions; availability of the manager to the issues involved and above all, the issue of follow-up. The absence of these, to a large degree, can engender conflicts.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The paper then intends to inquire into the following objectives.

1. Examine the most common problems associated with industrial relations practice in three communities in Rivers State.
2. To see if these problems have any correlation with the continual outbreak between existing companies and the host communities.
3. To determine if the continual conflicts in the communities is the function of the local chiefs, the youths or the industrial relations managers of the existing companies.

### **Research Question**

The following research questions x-ray the tone of the paper.

1. What are the most common problems associated with the practice of industrial relations in these communities?
2. To what degree do these problems have any correlation with the continual conflicts in the communities selected?
3. Is the continual conflict between existing companies and their host communities the function of the youth, the local chiefs or the industrial relations manager?

### **Statement of Problem**

A number of factors account for the continual conflicts between companies and their host communities. Most often, hand-pointing and gain-sayings are attributed to the function of the youths of the communities and sometimes too, to the local chiefs. This divergence in opinions has continually defiled a united approach to conflicts involving companies and their host communities. The paper then argues that the companies themselves: (their industrial units) are the major cause of conflicts in some host communities. What then is involved, the paper argues. is that companies begin to strengthen their industrial relations units as this will go a long way in checking conflicts between them and their work environment?

### **Significance of Study**

The functions of industrial relations managers in third world states are not readily used in the management of conflict. What this shows is that the services of industrial relations managers are not being felt, thereby paving way for market gap and a breakdown in the economy. Restoring it then will not only maximize the economy, conflicts will be reduced as policy makers and organizations will have enough data to decide their activities with the environment concerned.

### **Conceptual Issues of Industrial Relations Practice**

Positions are that industrial relations practice does not exceed that of conflict management; labour and customer relations; analyses of emerging conflicts in host communities; communication, and all such that involve peace-keeping (Nicole, 2018; Leo, 2018).

By these roles then, companies can probably keep themselves safe out of trouble from both their external and internal publics. But even at that, conflicts have continually engulfed most industrial communities. This probably stems from the nonchalance of companies: specifically their industrial relations unit. For one, in Sharma (2000) industrial relations came as a result of the nature of human society and the businesses around. Etimologically, it is the involvement of the term industry and the relations existing between workmen and the management. Knowing the nature of humans, there can be no productivity of labour without adequate compensations. Industrial relations then wide across work related issues, such as collective bargaining; power dominance; commitment of employees; conflict resolutions: pluralism and bilateralism of labour structure etc. Kumar (1961).

What then is left over the years is that the human society is industrially inclined and the consequence is the tendency for humans to conflict themselves. The emergence of industrial relations then should be able to check this, Allan Flanders (1970), Fashoyin (1992). It then follows that conflicts have continually defiled occupational knowledge due to nonchalance of industrial practitioners. This is mostly so in third world states where office span does not exceed the role of the general managers. In some companies too, the human resource manager acts as the industrial relations officers but without the basic information or knowledge of the office he occupies. In Nicole(2018), human resource unit is distinctive from the work of the industrial relations officer. Essentially, it does not exceed that of communication between the management and the external and inter publics. The life of communication according to (Fajana, 2015) is an applied one; which further helps industrial relations manager resolve impending conflict (Adeniji et al., 20015).

In labour relations commissions code, it is stated that the industrial relations officer. Primarily known as employee relations representative, is saddled with the following responsibilities.

1. Represent members effectively on relations to matters arising within the industry or establishment.
2. Participate in negotiations as established by respective customs
3. Act in accordance with existing laws and regulations of the union and the industrial relations practice.
4. Having regards for the good and operations of the industry.
5. Maintaining and keeping to job standards; company-rules; disciplinary conditions etc. Source: Section 42 of the Industrial Relations Act (1990).

The above duties then underscore, content wise, the role of the industrial relations manager as the gate keeper of the relations between the establishment and her workmen or the external publics. It then follows that the continuous conflict in most communities in Rivers State, especially between the communities and companies is due to incompetence on the company's industrial relations unit. It is no doubt true that the youth and the local chiefs, to some degree, contribute to ridden conflicts, but this is not exceedingly beyond the expertise of the industrial relations officer.

### **Attachment Theory**

One major theory that underscores the natural need of conflict is that of attachment theory advanced by Thomas N. Bradbury and Benjamin Kamey. Hence when people conflict they are unconsciously asking for attention, especially where their needs are in the hands of an attachment figure. Attachment theory then argues that humans have attachment behaviour system which helps them check how close or distant they can be with another. Thus when they perceive the attachment figure to be responsive they become relaxed. They become vindictive and aggitational when they feel that the attachment figure is not present and responsive to their needs. It then follows that the continual crisis in some communities stems from the perception of the communities have about the industrial relations unit of the companies as being nonresponsive to their needs. In order to draw the attention of their attachment figure which is that of the companies, they become volatile. Socially speaking these communities are emotionally attached to their environment and to the working companies and the companies not being responsive to their needs engenders conflict.

**Methodology**

Three communities in Obio/Akpor Local Government were adopted for the research. Out of the three communities, fifty youths each, were interviewed. The intention of the researcher in using only the youths was because they are the ones who mainly engage in conflict with the working companies. Furthermore, the use of Linkert's scaling method was used in the analysis of result.

**Presentation of Data Analysis**

**RQ1:** What are the problems associated with the practice of industrial relations in your communities

Item		A	U	D	SD	TOTAL	La
The problems in the industrial relations in your community range from that of dishonesty, non-availability of the industrial relations manager, absence of follow-u	5	4	3	2	1	15	4.0
	90	30		17	13	150	
	450	120	0	34	13	607	

The result from the above table holds through to the objective of the research, which was to find out the major problems associated with the practice of industrial relations in three communities in Rivers State, thus Choba, Aluu and Alakahia. Hence, the result-4.0

**RQ2:** Do these problems in an wa contribute to the conflicts in the communities

Item	SA			D	SD	TOTAL	La
Conflicts continue in the communities because of these problems	5	4	3	2	1	15	3.0
	135	10	I	I	3	150	
	675	40	3	2	3	732	4.9

As well the result in the above table holds through to the fact that the issue of dishonesty lack of availability of attachment figure (industrial relations manager) to the communities and the issue of follow-up, have continually contributed to the outbreak of conflicts between the companies and host communities.

**RQ3:** Are the youths and the local chiefs the major cause of outbreak of conflicts in the communities?

Item		A	U	D	S D	E	
						TOTAL	
The industrial relations managers sent to the communities are sometimes the major cause of conflicts in the communities and not necessarily the youths or the local chiefs.	5	4	3	2	I	15	1.a 3 4.6
	122	16	2	3	7	150	
	610	64	6	6	7	693	

The paper then concludes from the above result that, often times, the industrial relations managers constitute a greater cause of the conflict. Even if relief aids have been sent to the communities; there is need for a follow-up; honesty in negotiations and above all availability of the manager to the communities. It then follows that existing companies must adopt these life styles in order to be conflict free, at least to some degree.

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