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**Research Article**

# Press Enterprise and Structural Reforms in Times of Socio-Political Crisis in Côte d'Ivoire: The Case of the Press Organization Fraternité Matin

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**Abstract:** The objective of this article is to understand the management of the reforms implemented by the Fraternité Matin group during the socio-political and military crisis in order to maintain the information processing process. This study was part of a dual quantitative and qualitative approach. Thus, a sample of 80 workers was selected to whom a questionnaire and interviews were administered to trade union officers and the head of personnel because of their position and knowledge of the statutes and functioning of the Fraternité Matin group or the company New Edition and Press of Ivory Coast (CNEPIC). It appears that the resistance observed in the performance of tasks is the result of the applicability of strategies in the integral management of human resources with a view to efficient consumption of information.
**Keywords:** management - consumption - socio-political - reforms.

## INTRODUCTION

The plurality of public companies in Côte d'Ivoire is located in a post-independence context. The State justifies this action by the absence of a dynamic private sector. The objectives of these enterprises included ensuring full employment, contributing to growth and boosting economic take-off, promoting balanced development and helping to combat regional disparities, and achieving many other social and macroeconomic objectives (Five-Year Plans for Economic, Social and Cultural Development in Côte d'Ivoire, 1985). In this context, the State plays the role of the main economic agent: this role has been reflected in the importance of the resources mobilized by the State as well as in the number of public jobs offered and the number of companies created (M. Zadi, 1998).

Indeed, investment in human resources is more than a necessity for Côte d'Ivoire in the aftermath of independence; it is necessary for it to integrate the global economy in terms of data consumption, in order to initiate sustainable development and achieve social well-being. Among the companies created after independence is the Fraternité Matin group (Printing and Press Company created in December 1963). Before the multi-party system in 1990, the main daily Fraternité Matin was the only one covering Côte d'Ivoire in terms of the written press. This monopoly underwent a transformation with the presence of new press companies in the 1990s. This situation led to a recession that was solved thanks to reforms initiated by management through publication diversification.

However, Côte d'Ivoire is breaking with a tradition of political stability that has made it a model in the West African sub-region. It is going through an unprecedented socio-political and economic crisis which not only compromises the continuity of the State, but also releases a burden of violence in the social body (F. Akindès, 2004). These various crises and especially that of the post-electoral crisis of 2010 will disrupt or even modify the way the said company operates internally and externally. In other words, the management of human resources in these times of escalating violence in order to maintain the normal functioning of the information processing system at Fraternité Matin is presented as an action that arouses a certain curiosity. This action would be linked to the development of forms of reconstruction of workers' social identities because of the reinvestment of forms of antagonism observed in society (V. Adjoumani, 2013). This communication aims to understand the operational reforms and socio-professional relations generated by

the socio-political and military crisis at the Fraternité Matin media organisation.

## I. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Schütz (1971), in a phenomenological approach, focuses on what can inform individual action in daily life. The question he raises is not that of explaining objective social phenomena, but that of understanding action. The author therefore proposes to describe the actor's action in his social environment, to understand the intersubjective relationships and to examine the understanding relationships between the actors. The observation of social activity is based on phenomenology and intentionality. Understanding the actions of others is achieved by knowing the intentions of others and their motives. Indeed, we can prove that all social relations as understood by the individual, a human being naively living in a world centred on me, have as a prototype the social relationship that links me to an individual alter ego with whom time and space are shared (Schütz, idem.).

It will be a privileged object of sociology in everyday life to study, for example, how actors have used typologies to understand and behave in the social world. It examines how individuals, in order to understand their social environment and to behave in relation to others, use social types, synthetic models of conformity between motives and acts or models of social status. By projecting these types onto his experience, the actor expects certain behaviours and organizes his experience accordingly.Indeed, the relevance of this approach is linked to the interactions between management and workers, to the company's monitoring objectives more than to its causes, to the actions implemented in order to avoid the closure of this information structure despite the socio-political crisis. It is a question of resistance and strengthening the positioning of the Fraternité Matin group according to the goals it sets for itself.

The choice of this theory is justified by the fact that it highlights the actions of actors in order to give meaning or legitimize certain practices. The analysis of Fraternité Matin's operations in a context of socio-political crisis is linked to the various actions that consist in taking initiatives and rethinking the company's operating structures.

In addition, the information collection methodology requires the elaboration of a sample. Sampling is a small population, supposed to contain all the characteristics of the overall population (M. Grawitz, 1996). P. N'da (2003) adds that useful information can be collected on a fraction (sample) of the whole (population) to access generalizations. There is a plurality of sampling.

In this study, we used quota sampling. He brought together some Fraternité Matin employees in order to obtain information on the new management of the company during the period of socio-political crisis. At the level of the governance body, we addressed the Director of Human Resources and 5 work team leaders in the workshops. We interviewed 6 people and 64 submitted a questionnaire.

## II. RESULTS

### 1. Redefining Schedules in Production Work

This is the time system that applies to production staff consisting mainly of workers. In periods of socio-political stability, the administration complied with the following schedules: 07h30mn-12h30mn; 14h30mn-18h00mn. The production staff respected the following schedules: 06h00mn;-14h00mn (morning) ; 14h00mn-22h00mn (afternoon) ; 22h00mn-6h00mn (night). However, in periods of unrest and socio-political violence in Côte d'Ivoire, in the Fraternité Matin group, only the working hours of production staff were modified, since those of administrative staff were not influenced in any way by curfew hours. From now on, the factory hours are as follows: 07h00 mn -14h00 mn (morning); 14h00 mn - 20h00 mn (afternoon); 20h00 mn - 07h00 mn (night) Change in the factory hours meets the support of all workers.

In addition, fear and anguish linked to the context of the socio-political and military crisis led the workers, through the trade unions, to negotiate a change in the rotation system at the factory every two days. Changes have also occurred in the functioning of the work teams. This new orientation of SNPECI, in terms of production objective, responds to the concern to avoid overproduction which would lead to unsold product stocks. This results in a decrease in the company's activity which encourages a restructuring of work teams at the operational level. From now on, each of the production units will be reduced in number. The reduction in working hours due to the elimination of overtime, the cost of which the company no longer wants to bear. The reduction in working time implies a reduction in salary. However, the reduction in working hours is a variable that structures social relationships within the Fraternité Matin group.

### 2. Socio-Political Crisis and Recomposition of Relations between Agents

It is the tradition of the Fraternité Matin media organisation to recruit its staff directly by the human resources departments after having made the official announcements. This means either the recruitment of a new agent, or the position is filled by a worker from the company who corresponds to the research profile and it is the latter option that is preferred. Another distinctive feature of SNPECI is to facilitate the recruitment of certain agents by allowing "managers" or other workers of the company to support the case of a relative... This

system which we call sponsorship or cooptation concerns certain office jobs and work in the workshop. Indeed, it is the tradition of this company to recruit its staff directly by the human resources department after having made official announcements.

In interpersonal relations, the various crises have led to a recomposition of the relationships between agents, this time with reference to ethnicity and political ideals. In fact, the grouping of certain workers according to ethnicity, religion of belonging or political ideology within the Fraternité Matin group is indicative of the reinvestment of the types of reports generated by the antagonists within the global society. Also, the climate of mistrust and suspicion was accentuated by the crisis of 19 September 2002, which promoted the social reconstruction of identities between workers... Some call their colleagues "attackers", while others call them "patriots". Therefore, we put a lot of reserve in what we say or do within the company.

At the level of working relationships, the points of disagreement remain the difference of opinion, this concerns both the communication and transmission of messages in the performance of tasks and people's problems. Moreover, group relations, through trade union life, have not escaped the upheaval caused by the various social, political and military crises. Since 1965, there had been a union structure, the Mutuelle des Agents de Fraternité Matin, in this case. Since July 2006, the company has had five (5) union structures. Indeed, trade union officers are accused of taking decisions without giving them the necessary information.

### 3. The Challenges and Perspectives of the Fraternité Matin Group In The Face Of the Various Socio-Political Crises in Human Resources Management.

They are characterized by the definition of the objectives that the company must achieve in the short, medium and long term. The achievement of these objectives cannot be known and understand the company's approach through the identification of the Fraternité Matin group employee is represented in the organization for which he works.

The Fraternité Matin group's challenge of stability in times of socio-political crisis is found in its editorial line translated as "neither neutral nor partisan" and goes back to a set of relationships or arrangements based on responsibility, autonomy and professionalism that seek to rise above partisan, political, religious and ethnic considerations. This company would like to be a professional press organisation that contributes to cohesion and national unity. Also, the ambition to make the Fraternité Matin group a reference in the national and international press requires professional workers equipped to practise their profession. Thus, seminars and weekly meetings are held in the company. To do this, managers communicate the company's objectives, values and image to all employees.

Improving the external environment is an element that is part of the Fraternité Matin group's challenges and perspectives and this can be reflected in the painting of the company's premises, the creation of a green space and its regular maintenance. This whole initiative contributes to creating a pleasant and healthy environment. This could be a source of motivation for the worker. The improvement of the internal environment is reflected in the following facts:

- Computerization of the editorial staff;
- Redevelopment of workers' premises and offices to make them more comfortable;
- Facilitating communication by restoring telephone lines in all offices and installing information boards for workers;
- The creation of a health insurance;
- The project to rehabilitate the disease screening centre at the printing works.

### III. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The first ambition of any company in times of socio-political crisis is to safeguard and preserve the company against bankruptcy and closure. In the case of this study on human resources management at the Fraternité Matin group; the context of the disruption of the socio-political and economic imbalance has caused the reduction of working hours, overtime, personnel, production and dismissal of workers. These measures are in fact taken to amortize the expenses and expenses of the Fraternité Matin group companies.

These new reforms are therefore being observed through changes in the way the company works and in the way it is structured. Indeed, these methods adopted by the Fraternité Matin group are combined with the theory of human relations defended by Elton Mayo (1933) which stipulates that human relations based on the principle that the company must take into account the human and social aspect and no longer only the mechanical and physical aspect of the human factor. In this vein, Bogomolova (1974) argues that performance and production within the company cannot be explained only at the psychological level of the company. But they are part of much more global logics that integrate and go beyond the psychological levels of the company. Faced with the effects of the crisis, the Fraternité Matin group is working to redirect the company's objectives according to the current socio-political situation.

Thus, the reorganization of work on production personnel, the modification of the system of rotation of workers' tasks, the functioning of work teams can be explained by the theory of social change through conflict. According to the proponents of this trend (Marx, 1883 and Darhendorf, 1929); this

phenomenon originates in the contradiction of the social structure and opposes social groups.

Human relations within the Fraternité Matin group have been particularly affected by the socio-political crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. Indeed, it is customary or traditional for this company to recruit its staff through advertisements of the required profile. But, in this uncertain period, certain phenomena of non-legal recruitment have emerged through the sponsorship or cooptation of certain individuals by management. To this end, during the socio-political crisis, the Fraternité Matin Company produced unique relationships between its members or workers that are built on a symbolic system (religion, ethnicity, membership rule, etc.).

In this respect, some authors of interactionist theory assert that experience, motivation, professional relationship are confronted or modified by each of the relationships that the worker entails with others (mutual mistrust, mutual division etc...). To deal with the weakening of social relations due to the socio-political context, some studies such as those by Gbidia (1995) therefore raise awareness among business leaders and workers of the benefits of social cohesion. Indeed, social cohesion in this harmful environment is one of the remedies for Fraternité Matin to resist bankruptcy and closure.

For his part, Baumgarten (1948) draws the attention of business leaders to the dangers of authoritarian management. This form is likely to alter working time relations, wage increases; to this end, it argues that when working time reductions, wage increases and other demands have only been achieved at the cost of hard fighting, the employee no longer believes in employer benevolence; it is dangerous to accept improvements in working conditions only under duress, strike, etc. The attitude of the boss is called into question here; thus, the author proposes to give the principles of democratic management to the boss. While leaving aside the training of employees to participate in this new form of management, he limits his instructions to a purely psychological level. The analysis would benefit from integrating the economic dimensions and social issues related to power positions in the company.

## CONCLUSION

The Fraternité Matin or Société Nouvelle de Presse et Edition de Côte d'Ivoire (SNPECI) group has been affected in its internal and external functioning by the socio-political and military crisis. However, this institution has undergone a repositioning through reforms and the construction of new types of socio-professional relations. To clarify the objective of this study, we opted for both a quantitative and qualitative method that provides an opportunity to collect important information on the subject under consideration. The data processing was the subject of the mobilisation of the theory of action in order to better

appreciate the structure studied through the different types of relationships maintained by the actors as well as the forms of strategies implemented. In short, the institutional framework for information processing in the face of the socio-political crisis has been set in a linear rhythm of functioning based on certain organizational reforms. However, does the prospect of post-crisis economic recovery not raise the issue of improving human resources management at the Fraternité Matin group?

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