



Volume 6 (2) (2023): 143-157

The Indonesian Journal of Social Studies

Available at <https://journal.unesa.ac.id/index.php/jpips/index>

Labour Unionism and Workers Welfare in Nigeria

Ugo Chuks OKOLIE 1)*

1) Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Science, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

Abstract

This paper looks at the contributions worker unions have made to ensuring prompt promotions for workers, the regular delivery of training programs for workers, and the extent to which effective labour unionism has ensured the prompt payment of pensions and gratuities to retirees in Nigeria. The study's theoretical framework was the pluralism theory by Flanders and Fox (1970). Secondary sources were used to collect the data. On the produced materials, contextual analyses were conducted. The results of the study showed that due to the difficult political environment in the nation, Nigeria has not had effective unionism over the years. Because of this, it is uncommon for employer support employee welfare programs like job security, prompt promotion with commensurate financial benefits, regular training programs, and pension and gratuity benefits to be provided. All of these have caused employees across Nigerian government institutions to experience hunger, poverty, and a lack of motivation to carry out their assigned duties. The researcher suggested that labour unions in Nigeria, among other things, should persuade government institutions to ensure adequate provision of workers welfare in order to improve the socioeconomic wellbeing of the workers and toward higher performance in the organizations; unions should seek redress in industrial court with regards to any infringement on the rights of any worker in Nigeria as this has produced results in the past.

Keywords: Labour Union, Government, Workers' Welfare, Organizational Performance

How to Cite:

*Corresponding author:

E-mail: ugookolie3@gmail.com

e-ISSN 2615-5966 (Online)

This is an open access article under the CC-BY-SA license



Introduction

Workers all over the world create unions to enable them to identify and advance their common interests. To protect themselves at work and to improve their working conditions through collective bargaining, membership and education, political lobbying and campaigning, etc., workers voluntarily founded labour or trade unions. These organizations also serve as a reliable platform for workers to express their opinions on societal issues. The labour movement, of which unionism is a subset, encompasses a number of more or less closely related organizations that work to elevate the economic, social, and cultural standing of their members. These organizations include labour parties, worker's mutual insurance organizations, producer and consumer cooperatives, and more. The core concerns of labour unionism are the actual operation of union activities and the ongoing fight for the welfare of workers. Therefore, it is said that unionism works best when it fosters harmony and cooperation among its participants. Effective unionism constantly promotes and projects its members. It calls for an internal democratic unionism where members are acknowledged as parties in development and where equity, fairness, and justice are upheld. It suggests leadership free from resentment, bribery, and corruption, and where union executives make the welfare of the workers their top priority. Effective unionism prioritizes and pursues member welfare above all else to enhance their socioeconomic well-being.

Over time, workers' welfare has risen to the top of labour unionism's main objectives. In his definition of welfare for 2019, Dushar (2019), says that it is "the voluntary efforts of the employers to establish, within the existing industrial system, working and, occasionally, living conditions of the market." Therefore, in addition to wages, salaries, and incentives, the term "welfare" refers to all facilities and comforts provided by the employer to employees as may be required by law, industry customs, and market conditions. Employee welfare includes, among other things, job security, promotion, consistent training, housing, medical and educational facilities, rest and recreation facilities, day nurseries and creches, insurance measures leave/holidays with pay taken voluntarily by the employers, and would also include programs like provident fund, gratuity, and pension, etc.

Due to their significance for both employee job performance and the overall performance of the company in modern labour-management relations, welfare packages are supported by laws and conditions of employment. For example, Section 173 (1) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution, as amended, states that "the right of a person in the federation's public service to receive pension or gratuity shall be regulated by law." The Training Fund (the ITF) is established by the Training ITF Act, Cap 19, LFN 2004 as amended by the Industrial Training Amendment Act, 2011 (the "ITF ACT"). The ITF's goal is to encourage the development of relevant skills in business or industry in order to create a pool of native workers who can meet the demands of the economy (Banwo & Ighodalo, 2018). According to researchers like Okolie and Agbefe (2020), among other things, the goals of employee welfare include boosting employee morale, developing a loyal and competitive workforce, fostering a positive attitude toward one's job, employer, and management, and retaining skilled and talented workers.

Workers' eyes "became opened" as well as those of the employers, who saw the workers as parties in progress rather than mere labourers who can be hired and fired at any time without any fear of retaliation after the Labour Union Organization Act of 1938 was passed, allowing workers to organize a union that will influence as well as protect their rights and interests at any given level. The legal status that labour unions assumed as a result of such a law gave them the right to engage in collective bargaining with their employers regarding any matter relating to the interests of the workforce and the nature of work in general (Okoroafor, 2013). Other unions, including the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE), Nigeria Bar Association (NBA), and Senior Staff Association of

Nigerian Universities (SSANU), to name a few, were founded as a result of the aforementioned background. The activities of the labour unions, which were governed by the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) for many years, helped to overturn the harsh policies and actions of the government. NLC serves a variety of social, economic, and political purposes for all Nigerians, including both employed and unemployed people (Okechukwu, 2016). The Nigerian labour union movement, like its counterparts in other parts of the world, has a proud history that is marked by tenacious struggles and principled opposition to state policies that are detrimental to the interests of the working class. A conscious effort was made in the past to organize the rank and file members as a defense against state repression, and alliances were formed between the labour union movement and various groups within the larger labour movement.

Contrary to popular belief, Okolie and Agbefe (2020) and Alaribe (2013) note that since Nigeria's democratic transition in 1999, emerging union leaders have fallen asleep and chosen to align themselves with the corrupt ruling elites by preying on the gullibility of the majority of the country's working class and misleading their rank-and-file members. Without taking into account the interests of the workers they represent, they are only concerned with their own selfish interests. In Nigeria, the beginning of unionism can be linked to the establishment of the state in 1991. There are several of these unions in the state, including ASUU, NULGE, SSANU, NBA, NMA, etc., drew their origin from their mother national bodies from where state branches and chapters were spread across the thirty six (36) states of the federation. Prior to 2013, workers' welfare, including job security, advancement when due, prompt payment of pensions and gratuities, and regular training, was generally taken care of, despite the fact that demands from workers were never satisfied without significant conflict with employers. However, the state government, which is the largest employer of labour in the state, appears to have been flagrantly disregarding labour laws and the conditions of service of workers since 2013 to the present. Given the frequent and ongoing conflicts between the state government and labour unions in Nigeria, it is important to critically assess and consider this issue (Agah & Ikenga, 2019). Every time the unions plan or begin industrial action, they seem to be met with sack threats, mistreatment, harassment, intimidation, arrests of union leaders, beatings of union executives, maiming of some active members, unlawful stoppage of salary, kidnapping of vocal union leaders, poor conditions of service, welfare packages, and ineffective bargaining process to improve the socioeconomic status of workers across government establishments in the country.

The fact that staff training in the state has not yet received the necessary attention is concerning. Where training is offered, it rarely corresponds to training requirements. Along with the aforementioned issues, job security in Nigerian government institutions is not a given. When employees demand their entitlements, they are frequently threatened with termination. The worst affected are those with amputated salaries who work in universities. The intimidation and repression tendencies of the Nigeria government towards the welfare of workers in the country appear to be handicapping the labour unions in the country. Given the aforementioned, and given the precarious socioeconomic circumstances that workers in the country are required to perform their duties, an investigation into the effectiveness of labour unions in Nigeria in securing the welfare of their members is warranted. Based on the foregoing context, the study became necessary.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Concept of Labour Unionism

Over the years, labour unionism has emerged as one of the most prevalent and well-liked aspects of every organization's workforce. It aims to protect workers' interests and rights from

management's (employers') arbitrary economic exploitation and degradation of the dignity of labour (Otobo, 1986). As a result, it is regarded as a fundamental tool and instrument used by employees in organizations to seek understanding and to influence management decisions that might be negative or at odds with the terms and conditions of the contract of agreement. According to Obiekwe and Obibhunun (2019), a labour union is an organization that represents its members and mediates between them and their employer in order to prevent any unfair treatment that may be meted out to them by the employers. In turn, the organization ensures that its members are committed to working in a way that will result in a high level of productivity and organization efficiency in general. It also refers to formalized associations of workers who communicate with employers about a variety of matters pertaining to their members' terms of employment (Adefolaju, 2013).

According to the Nigerian Labour Union Act of 1973, which Obiekwe and Obibhunun (2019) cite, a labour union is any association of workers or employees, whether they are employed temporarily or permanently, whose goal is to regulate the terms and conditions of employment of workers. This association may have this goal for any reason, including restraint of trade, and its goal may or may not be the provision of benefits to members. The two key requirements of this definition are that an association be comprised of either employees or employers and that it serve a legitimate purpose namely, the regulation of the terms and conditions of employees' employment. Another definition of a labour union is an association of wage earners and union officials who work together to advance and pursue their shared interests and welfare and to negotiate favorable employment terms and conditions with employers. A labour union is a group of employees established to uphold the rights and interests of its members. Another way to describe it is as a group of workers who came together to advance their own interests in terms of pay, benefits, and working conditions (Omeje & Ogbu, 2019). According to Okolie and Agbefe (2020), who observe that the essence of labour unions is to equalize the strength between workers and employers in matters of collective bargaining, Yesufu (1984) captured the overall goals of labour unionism as follows:

1. Negotiate better employment terms and conditions with employers or the government.
2. Make demands and publicize them through protests, strikes, or other means to stop the erosion of the agreed-upon terms of employment.
3. Make an effort to ensure that labour unions remain in existence permanently or continuously.
4. Defend employees from degrading jobs and unfair treatment by employers.
5. Give workers a sense of solidarity and camaraderie by giving them a collective identity.
6. Influence government policies that negatively impact workers.
7. Serve as a platform for the society's radical social and economic transformation.
8. Work together with other societal groups to promote the growth of the economy in general.
9. Restrain employer excesses and give employees some sense of group power.

History and Development of Labour Unionism in Nigeria

Before they came into contact with the colonial masters, Nigerians who worked in craft or laboured organized themselves into a variety of associations. These associations, which include associations of hunters, blacksmiths, carvers, and weavers, could be considered labour unions because they were established to set prices and wages for their services, regulate working conditions, and provide mutual aid (Ananaba, 1970). There were no employment contracts as we know them today because the sons learned the trade and took over from their fathers in these associations, which were made up of labourers and their sons or other blood relatives most often (Fashoyin, 1980). The duties of these organizations, some of which still exist in the villages today, included organizing the payment of homage to the king and organizing the resolution of disputes and the regulation of relationships between labourers (Lloyd, 1953).

The workers in the civil service of the then-Colonial government organized themselves into worker's representatives in 1912, which marked the official beginning of the organized labour movement in Nigeria. The Nigeria Civil Service Union was subsequently given to this. This served as a turning point for workers in other industries who wanted to organize labour unions both before and after the country gained independence in 1960. In 1975, under General Murtala Mohammed's military rule, there were over 1000 labour unions in the nation, including mushroom unions. The government created a commission to investigate the activities of the various unions in 1976, and they also appointed an administrator to run the unions and develop a structure for their proper management. This became necessary because the ideological division within the unions was causing issues for the nation.

These unions were reorganized into 42 along industrial lines toward the end of 1977. In addition, the government insisted that a labour center be established because there were numerous multiple centers. The Nigeria Labour Congress was established and inaugurated in February 1978. With the support of labour union (Amendment) Decree 22 of 1978, the 42 industrial unions that existed at the time joined the Nigeria Labour Congress as affiliates. The labour unions underwent another restructuring in 1989, this time into 29 affiliate unions of the Nigeria Labour Congress. Additionally, the Obasanjo administration worked on a labour law in 2004 to once more make room for multiple centers. To date, a number of labour unions have emerged as affiliates of the NLC to serve the needs of members. However, it would be impossible to talk about the history and development of labour unions in Nigeria without mentioning their contributions to the period before and after independence.

Employee Welfare

Employee welfare is a crucial element of the human resource management strategy used to inspire employees to achieve high levels of productivity within the company. The International Labour Organization (ILO), (2010) noted that employee welfare should be understood as such services, facilities, and amenities which may be established in or around businesses to enable the people employed in them to perform their work in a healthy and peaceful environment and to take advantage of facilities which improve their health and bring about high morale. Anything done for an employee's comfort and improvement that is provided in addition to pay is referred to as welfare. Employee welfare, according to Bharathi and Padmaja (2018), refers to the protection of workers' well-being by employers, labour unions, and governmental and non-governmental organizations. The arguments in favor of employee welfare include acknowledging the special position that each employee holds in society and doing right by them, motivating and retaining workers, reducing social ills, and enhancing the company's reputation in the community. A desirable state of being that includes one's physical, mental, moral, and emotional well-being is called welfare.

The idea of welfare is a good one. Biological and social welfare are essential for establishing the bare minimum of conditions for existence. The establishment of the minimum desirable requirements for certain welfare components, such as health, food, clothing, housing, medical assistance, insurance, education, recreation, and so forth, is required by the positive nature. Employee morale and motivation are kept up longer thanks to welfare. The welfare measures can take any form and don't necessarily have to be financial. Employee welfare includes keeping an eye on working conditions, fostering industrial harmony through the development of a health infrastructure, industrial relations, and insurance for workers' families against illness, accidents, and unemployment. The term "labour" or "employee welfare" refers to all employee activities that are focused on giving workers additional benefits and services beyond pay and benefits (Deepti,

2018). The essence of employee welfare, according to scholars like Bharathi and Padmaja (2018), Dushar (2019), and Ganesh (2020), is to:

1. Improve the lives and health of employees;
2. Make employees happy and satisfied;
3. Provide workers with relief from industrial fatigue and enhance their intellectual, cultural, and material conditions of living;
4. Influence employee sentiment and aid in preserving industrial peace. The employee is content with the working conditions when they believe that their employer and the government are interested in how they live their daily lives;
5. Enhance the worker's mental and moral wellbeing by reducing instances of the social evils of industrialization. An employee who works in a toxic environment is more likely to engage in vices like drinking, gambling, and prostitution. Healthy environments acted as a deterrent to such vices;
6. Aids in enhancing the organization's reputation and goodwill;
7. Control labour - absenteeism and turnover.

The worker becomes content and happy with his or her work as welfare improves the working and personal conditions of the employees. This may lessen his or her desire to take unneeded time off and tend to lower absenteeism in the workplace.

Elements of Employee Welfare

The components of employee welfare, whether it be statutory, voluntary, or mutual, are recognizable. These include job security, prompt employee promotions, regular training programs to keep employees up to speed with the changing workplace, pensions, etc. These benefits, according to Deepti (2018), include retirement plans, paid time off, insurance, health care plans, food services, educational expenses, and social activities. According to Dushar (2019), employee welfare activities include medical services, canteen services, housing services, transportation services, sports and recreation services, advances and easy loan services, death/funeral services, thrift services, educational services, legal services, and other services. Here, a few of these welfare programs that are crucial to the paper's goals are briefly discussed:

i. Pension: Pensions are simply plans to give people a source of income from employment (Folorunsho, 2015). Pension plans serve as a social security maintenance strategy for workers after they retire and stop working. According to Ngwu (2013), cited in Eze & Anikeze (2018), a pension is a fixed amount other than wages that is paid to a pensioner on a regular basis, typically in monthly installments, in recognition of past services, age, merit, an injury, or a loss that person has suffered. It is a social security system in which employees receive retirement benefits for past services. Contributory or non-contributory pension plans are both possible. In a system where both the employer and the employee contribute to a pension savings account that the employee can access upon retirement, a contributory pension scheme is possible. On the other hand, non-contributory pension plans function in which the employer is solely responsible for making pension payments without any help from the employees.

ii. Job Security: Job security is one of the ways employers ensure that employees' dedication to the organization's goals and objectives is recognized. According to Shuvick and Mohammed (2018), the phrase refers to the knowledge that one's job is secure and that one is unlikely to be fired or made redundant. A worker's assurance or confidence that they will keep their current job is referred to as job security. According to Abolade (2018), job security for an employee is the state

in which his or her position is not in danger and the individual will remain employed for as long as the individual desires without any indication, either objective or subjective, that the individual might be fired. The purpose of job security is to reduce the employee's level of worry about his or her future career and to eliminate all forms of uncertainty. Employees within the company are motivated by their sense of job security. The need for pensions is best summed up by Okereke (2021) as follows:

1. Sincere concern for the welfare of a company's or organization's retired workers.
2. To demonstrate a sense of moral obligation toward the heirs of a man who passes away in the line of duty.
3. To maintain open channels of promotion within a business or organization by planning ahead for the orderly and respectable retirement of senior citizens.
4. Improve the conditions of employment with the company to attract higher-caliber hires and reduce wasteful labour turnover.
5. To ensure that retirees can contribute to the economy and society after they retire while preventing social disorder in the economy.

The aforementioned supported an earlier claim made by Adebayo (2006), who contended that employers place a higher value on pension and gratuity because they believe that by addressing employees' fears and securing their future needs, workers will be more motivated to contribute to an organization's success.

iii. Promotion: The welfare packages for employees must include promotion. According to Neck, Houghton, and Murray (2018), job promotion is the increase of employees in better jobs with greater responsibilities, accomplishments, facilities, status, proficiency demands, additional pay, and other benefits. Job promotion, according to Knick and Fugate (2017), happens when an employee transfers to a position with a higher salary, level, and responsibilities. Promotion offers chances for greater responsibility, social status, and personal development. According to Hasibuan (2018), a promotion enlarges an employee's authority and responsibility to higher positions within an organization so that duties, rights, and status are consistently bestowed upon employees in due course. Every employee's dream of getting promoted to a better position is important and worth striving for. Employees will be motivated to work harder, be more enthusiastic, and be disciplined towards the best accomplishment of organizational goals and objectives if there is a chance for them to be promoted based on the principles of fairness and objectivity (Muhammed, Herlina, & Nur, 2019).

According to Eka, Putra, Susila, and Yulianthini (2016), having promotional targets helps employees feel appreciated, needed, and recognized by their company. They contend that businesses can assist workers in realizing their potential and pursuing their desired careers by setting up training programs for staff members that can boost productivity and allow businesses to "reward" their efforts with promotions. The aforementioned welfare packages are intended to be offered as part of employee services to the organization in order to raise employee morale. Welfare packages are advantageous to the organization's performance and overall productivity as well as to the individual employees who use them. Scholars and organizational managers who want to stay competitively relevant in the fast-paced business environment project this idea on a global scale (Okereke, 2015).

iii. Employee Training: Training, according to Nushrat (2018), is a learning activity aimed at acquiring particular knowledge and skills for a job or task. It is a process or strategy by which employees' skills, aptitudes, and knowledge are upgraded and expanded in accordance with

modern trends so that they are prepared to meaningfully contribute to the overall goals and specific objectives of the organization. According to Gadi and Laluko (2019), training entails closing the performance gap between the present performance and the desired standard performance. Employee welfare is constituted by staff training. An employer who is aware of the performance level of his or her staff will probably offer regular training to ensure that the workers meet the standards. Training encourages employees to perform at a high level, and it also has positive effects on the organization. For this reason, Nwachukwu (1988), cited in Onah (2015), asserts that the following are signs that employees in any organization need training. (i) a lack of interest in one's job; (ii) a bad attitude toward work; (iii) low productivity; (iv) tardiness; (v) an excessive absentee rate; (vi) an excessive amount of complaining; (vii) a high rate of rejects or low-quality output; and (viii) a high rate of accidents and disobedience. Training programs are used to address these bad vices that lower employee performance.

Labour Unionism and Workers Welfare: The Nigerian Experience

Contextually, it is simpler to demonstrate the connection between unionization and worker welfare. It should go without saying that one of labour unionism's goals is to ensure that employers provide for the welfare of their employees. The advantages of labour unionism are mutual because it not only improves the socioeconomic status of the workforce but also significantly boosts the organization's overall productivity. Early in the nineteenth century, the idea of creating a labour union in Nigeria was first proposed. Among the very first unions to be established at that time was the Civil Service Union, which was established in 1912. The Nigerian Mechanic Union, the Railway Local-Drivers Union, etc. followed this. Similar to any other labour union in the world, the goals and objectives of these unions were to improve the working and living conditions of their members (Ubeku, 1983). In Nigeria, labour unionism was still in its infancy as of 1919, so people or workers did not place a lot of importance on it in relation to their work or jobs. However, with the introduction of the Labour Union Organization Act in 1938, which enables employees to create a union that will represent and defend their rights and interests at any level, both employees' and employers' eyes "became opened" and they began to view employees as partners in progress as opposed to mere labourers who can be hired and fired at any time without cause or repercussion. The legal status that labour unions assumed as a result of this enactment granted it the right to engage in collective bargaining with their employers with respect to any matter that relates to the interests of the workers and the nature of work in general.

In Nigeria today, the strategic umbrella bodies of the labour unions are the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the Labour Union Congress (TUC). Other labour unions such as the Academic Staff union of Universities (ASUU), the Senior Staff Association of Nigeria Universities (SSANU), the Nigeria Bar Association (NBA), National Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE), among others are part of the NLC and TUC. According to Okolie and Agbefe (2020), during the colonial era in Nigeria, labour unions fought against colonial rule and the exploitation of the Nigerian State. These labour union initiatives, carried out under the auspices of the NLC, are to blame for a number of changes in government actions and policies. NLC now serves as a social, economic, and political institution for all Nigerians employed and unemployed as well as the working class.

Whatever the case, collective bargaining is one of the main ways that worker welfare is decided in the modern era. According to Onah (2015), collective bargaining is a method used by management (employers) and the workers' representatives (unions) to solve and avert issues relating to pay, retirement, fringe benefits, disciplinary layoffs, promotions, work scheduling, and other employment conditions. Therefore, collective bargaining entails an agreement between employees and employers to resolve issues and problems related to human resource management. In essence,

collective bargaining, also known as joint negotiation, is a system of autonomously establishing workplace regulations between employers and labour unions. It is the process by which a party in labour relations makes demands or proposals, discusses, criticizes, explains, explores the implications of the proposals, or attempts to win their acceptance. In addition, Onah (2015) suggests that there are some prerequisites for collective bargaining. He contends that collective bargaining serves as a crucial point of contact between management and labour unions, and that in order for the machinery of collective bargaining to function effectively at any level, certain fundamental requirements must be met. The first step is to develop a large enough labour force. The existence of powerful, stable labour unions that are democratic in nature and free from outside influence comes next. Freedom of association and a favorable political environment are additional requirements. In a similar vein, collective bargaining cannot flourish or develop in a society where the public, in general, and the government, in particular, are not persuaded of the process' value as the best means of determining forms and conditions of employment. More importantly, the spirit of "give and take" must be prevalent and dominant in order for collective bargaining to take place in public organizations.

In addition to the principles of collective bargaining, Nigeria in general and Nigeria specifically have laws and provisions in their various conditions of service that should improve the management of state government institutions and the government's provision of workers' welfare. For instance, section 173 (1) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution, as amended, states that the right of a person working in the federal government's public service to receive a pension or gratuity must be protected by the law. Provisions for employee welfare, training, job security, and promotion, among other things, were made in the public service rules condition of service documents. However, due to some difficulties, Nigerian workers' unions have not been able to protect their welfare. Since the actions of the national bodies have an impact on the branches or chapters throughout the federation, it is essential to first draw conclusions from the Nigeria case before Nigeria. Alaribe (2013), cited in Okolie and Agbefe (2020), expressed regret that, since Nigeria's democratic transition in 1999, the country's emerging union leaders had become complacent and had chosen to align themselves with the corrupt ruling class. They did this by preying on the gullibility of the majority of the country's working class and using 'maradonic' tactics to mislead their rank-and-file membership. He claims that they do not take into account the interests of the workers they represent and are only concerned with their own selfish interests. Ifeanyi and Mondli (2020) noted that the current leadership of the labour union movement in Nigeria is connected to the process of emboigeisement. That is, the pursuit of material ascendancy in their analysis of labour unionism in Nigeria.

Because of this propensity, the leadership becomes socially estranged from the lower classes, leading to a way of life that fuels Nigerian politics' symbolism. The issue of political instability interference by Nigeria's two main political parties the All Progressive Congress (APC), the ruling party, and the People Democratic Party (PDP), the main opposition party is closely related to the aforementioned. Influential members of the two parties were allegedly caught funding certain events and procedures at the 2015 NLC Delegates Conference and using the occasion to drum up support for their respective political parties in the general elections of that year. The integrity of the conference and the subsequent NLC elections were compromised as a result. Meanwhile, the welfare of the Nigerian workers including Nigeria had dipped to a very low ebb following the poor monthly minimum wage of N18,000, implicating poverty (Ifeanyi & Mondli, 2020).

In Nigeria, industrial relations over the years had become a difficult issue to deal with owing to the fact that government in power dominated all the labour unions, ranging from NUT, NULGE, NMA, JUSUN, ASUU, NASU, SSANU and other unions in the state, this domineering attitude of the state government had really undermined the activities of labour unions in Nigeria to the extent that none of the above mentioned unions are able to engage government in collective bargaining to

determine the welfare of their members thereby making it extremely difficult for union leaders or workers of Nigeria to predict what their future could look like, because there is no indication on the side of government that they are willing to better the lots of the workers in Nigeria. This claim is supported by the Nigerian government's stance on worker advancement and annual promotions since 2015 to the present. Therefore, if the labour leaders and their members don't stand up for their rights and privileges, this scenario suggests that the economic situation for workers in Nigeria could get worse.

Strategies for Effective Labour Unionism

Cooperation among Workers: Employers (owners and managers of businesses) should support the participation of a union representative and employees in some decisions regarding working conditions because some employees may be more knowledgeable about ways to increase productivity in their departments and may speed up the process of reaching an agreement. This is due to the fact that union representatives can be used to achieve a "win-win" situation where both parties feel as though they gained something from the deal when conflicts between managers and employees arise at work.

Strong Activism among Union Leaders: Union members should make sure that only qualified, vetted, and trusted leaders who are actually workers should be elected into office at all levels local, state, and federal in order to address the problem of ineffective and passive leadership. Only moral leaders will have the guts to refuse the numerous financial incentives that the government and leaders of business will present to them. Additionally, union leaders should receive the appropriate training and education in order to understand the fundamental labour laws so that they can plan their actions within the bounds of the law and prevent pursuing phantoms while neglecting the real issues, particularly during collective bargaining and conflict resolution meetings. In order to give their members room for advancement, labour unions should inform workers of their rights and obligations and instill a sense of responsibility in them. They should also provide for the training and adequate education of their members.

Collabouration between Union Leaders and Employees: A level playing field should be established by labour unions for all members to participate in their decision-making processes. They must put on a strong, united front because having multiple unions weakens the influence and efficiency of unions. In this respect, labour unions ought to band together to speak with one voice in matters affecting their members and society at large. Additionally, members should be allowed to freely participate in all union programs and major decisions. The unions will only be taken seriously when society sees and understands that true democratic procedures are used in labour union activities. Overall, a union must put its members' needs first and not worry too much about taking a particular political stance or side in order to succeed.

Theoretical Framework

The 1970 pluralism theory developed by Flanders and Fox was adopted by the researcher as the analytical framework. The theory makes the assumption that there are various interests and interest groups at work. For instance, employers and their associations have a stake in increased productivity and fidelity, among other things. In contrast to the government and its various agencies, which look for higher taxes and industrial peace to promote economic growth and development, employees and their unions demand higher wages and job security? Additionally, the aforementioned interests are in constant opposition to one another, resulting in a tripartite relationship in the industrial relations system that is always fraught with conflict. These differences are to blame for the various economic, political, ideological, religious, racial, ethnic, gender, and value orientations that exist among the people who make up the workplace

community. Each of these groups strives for dominance by applying pressure to the authorities who can help them achieve their objectives and, when necessary, resorting to compromise.

The main goal of this theory is to continually attempt to resolve the conflicts that arise within and between the various interest sub-groups. Organizations are viewed from a pluralistic perspective as coalitions of opposing interests where management's job is to mediate between them once more. Labour unions are seen as legitimate representatives of employee interests, and most importantly, stability in industrial relations is seen as the result of concessions and compromises between management and unions. Although conflicts between management and employees are acknowledged as inevitable, they are not always accepted as legitimate. For this reason, workers join unions to protect their interests and have a voice in management decisions. As a result, unions maintain a balance of power between management and workers. This theory promotes collective bargaining as a means of resolving industrial conflict and holds that strong unions are not only desirable but also necessary. The root cause of the labour unionism crisis, which makes it difficult for effective unionism to determine the welfare of workers in Nigeria's workplace has been discovered by this theory.

The theory is relevant to the study because it is inevitable that conflict will arise at work because different groups exist there and have different goals. The beauty of efficient collective bargaining is the capacity of management, government, and other relevant stakeholders to harmonize such interests towards the accomplishment of common goal. Modern organizations are viewed by pluralism as pluralistic entities with members from a variety of backgrounds and interests that must be effectively managed in order to achieve the objectives of the organization. Therefore, effective unionism is necessary to protect those interests relating to worker welfare. The Nigerian government and management of government establishments should support union struggles as initiatives that focused on both the welfare of employees and ways to inspire the workforce to improve performance and the overall productivity of the company.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, efforts have been made to ascertain the role that effective unionization plays in ensuring the welfare of Nigerian workers. The need for the study arose from the inhumane treatment of workers, particularly from 2013 to the present, in Nigeria. Through collective bargaining, it is expected that the state's various labour unions will be able to influence the administrations of state institutions and the government to improve the socioeconomic situation of union members. This, however, has never been the case due to the unfortunate blatant government hostility toward the workforce, which has led to numerous strike actions. The lack of attention given to workers' welfare in Nigeria has significantly increased suffering among the populace. Among other things, Nigerian workers experience hunger, poverty, and some have even passed away from diseases that could have been avoided due to unfavorable working conditions. Job security is not guaranteed, effective unionism is lacking, and when labour unions and their members try to force through their demands for welfare, they are frequently met with suspension, the threat of losing their jobs, intimidation, and all other forms of unfair treatment. This unsightly situation de-motivates employees and causes them to perform poorly on their assigned tasks. Additionally, it has been noted that the effectiveness of labour unions in securing timely promotions for employees has not been felt. In Nigeria, being promoted is seen as a privilege rather than a worker's constitutional right. It rarely happens when it is due. Even when employees meet the requirements for advancement, staying in their current position over time makes it impossible for them to fulfill their obligations to their families because their expenses rise without a corresponding increase in status or pay.

The study's findings also indicate that the state's government institutions receive very little training overall. This is regrettable given the significance of staff training. In their attempts to convince employers to regularly provide training programs to consistently improve performance-related skills, labour unions in the state have not had much success. Training and staff advancement are given light treatment, while retirees are entitled to certain pension benefits. Since those who dared to speak out in favor of the welfare of workers were met with sack threats, intimidation, harassment, and other forms of abuse, it appears that union members have little influence over workers' welfare. Salary reductions, a delay in paying the amputated salary, and the government and its management's lack of commitment to enforcing the agreement reached with the labour unions are examples of how insensitivity to workers' welfare manifests in Nigeria. Because of this precarious situation, effective unionism is required as a surefire way for state employees to reclaim their freedom and rights. Union leaders are expected to take the lead in this situation by effectively representing their members even in the face of unrest and political crisis without undue compromise, so as to prevent job losses for those who enjoy the benefits of membership. The following suggestions were made to enhance the welfare of workers in Nigeria in light of the study's objectives:

1. In order to improve the socioeconomic wellbeing of the workforce and promote higher performance in the workplace, Nigerian labour unions should persuade government institutions to ensure adequate provision for workers' welfare. Unions must take the initiative to ensure that workers are promoted on time and with all of their entitlements attached. The union members should support their executives to the fullest extent possible in order to accomplish this.
2. A pension and a gratuity are worker rights. Unions are required to make sure that employees' rights are not violated. Union leaders should file a claim in the industrial court for compensation whenever a worker's rights are violated because doing so has in the past produced favorable outcomes.
3. Job security must be ensured in order to improve the welfare of Nigerian workers. This can be accomplished through effective unionism, which is free of animosity and division, but rather union activities that pursue the fundamental goals of their unions without regard for the opinions of others.
4. Through routine labour union participation in key decision-making, Nigerian organizations should also ensure worker participation in the management of their operations. For instance, on matters involving the implementation of a new pay policy, the workforce being streamlined, the introduction of new technology, and other issues.
5. Commitment should be a criterion for hiring into labour unions. To ensure that they become mass organizations, labour unions should actively look to attract a large number of devoted members. A labour union's ability to carry out its mandated function of defending and advancing the interests of its members will increase with increased membership.
6. Mutual trust should be developed between management and the unions. Lack of such trust would be fatal for the efficient operation of organizations, which would obstruct organizational growth.

REFERENCES

- Abolade, D.A. (2018). "Impacts of Employee, Job Security and Employee turnover on Organizational Performance in private and public sector organizations". *Studies in Business and Economics*, 13(2), 5-19.

- Adebayo, Y.K. (2006). *Essentials of Human Resource Management*. Benin City: Weliscope Services.
- Agah, B. E., & Ikenga, F. A (2019) Retirement Adjustment Challenges Among Local Government Retirees in Ethiopia East Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria. *Journal of Management Sciences*, 7(1), 292-301.
- Ananaba, W. (1970). *The Labour Union Movement in Nigeria*. Enugu: Africana, Pub. Corp.
- Banwo, S., & Ighodalo, T. (2018). *Overview of Employment Related laws in Nigeria*. Benin City: Weliscope Services.
- Bharathi, D. S.B., & Padmaja, R. (2018). "The role of Welfare Facilities in Engaging Employees". *Journal of Business and Management*, 20(2), 9-14.
- Deepti, P. (2017). *Project Report on Employee Welfare Activities in Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (Bgipal)*. Submitted to Banasthali University, Rajasthan.
- Dushar, D. (2019). *Employee Welfare Management*. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335524100> on 20th June, 2023.
- Eka, I., Putra, G. S., Susila, G.P. A. J., & Yuhanthin, N.N. (2016). Pengaruh Produski, Biaya, *E-Journal Bisma Universities*, 6, 74 – 82.
- Eze, F.O., & Anikeze, N.H. (2018)." Effects of Contributory Pension Scheme on Worker's Performance in Nigeria University: A study of Federal Universities in South East, Nigeria". *Journal of Administration*, 3(2), 65-58.
- Fashoyin, T. (1980). *Industrial Relations in Nigeria Development*. London: Longman.
- Flanders, A., & Fox, A. (1970). *Theory of Pluralism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Folorunsho, A. (2015). "Effects of Pension Reform on Households savings in Nigeria." *International Journal of Public Administration and Management Research*, 3(1), 1 -9.
- Gadi, D. P., & Laluko, S. A. (2019). " Effects of Training of Academic Staff on Employee Performance in Federal Polytechnics in Nigeria". *International Journal of Engineering Technologies and Management Research*, 6(9), 1-21.
- Ganesh, P. G. (2020). "A study on Employee Welfare Measures and Construction in India". *International Journal of scientific & Technology Research*, 9(2), 990-997.
- Hasibuan, M. (2018). *Analysis Pengaruh Mutasi, Promosi: Jobatan Dan Kepuasan Kerja*.
- Ifeanyi, P. O., & Mondli, H. (2020). "An overview of the Conditions of Service for Workers and the Unions in South Africa and Nigeria". *African Sociological Review*, 24 (2), 51-76.
- ILO. (2010). *Report of Second Regional Seminar on Industrial Relations in ASEAN Region*. Banglok: ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.
- Kinicki, A., & Fugate, M. (2017). *Loose Leaf for Organizational Behaviour: A Practical Problem solving*. Approach: McGraw-Hill Education.

- Lloyd, P. (1953). *Craft Organisations in Yoruba Towns*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Muhammad, N.Y., Herlina, S., & Nur, Q.P. (2019). "Position Promotion and Employee Performance in the Regional Secretariat of Makassar City". *Journal of Umiah Ilmu Administration public*, 9(2): 326-334.
- Neck, C. P., Houghton, J. D., & Murray, E. L. (2018). *Organizational Behaviour: A skill-Building Approach*. New York: Sage Publications.
- Ngwu, G.O. (2013). "*Administration of Employees Retirement and Benefits in Nigeria*". Enugu: Academic Publishing Company.
- Nushrat, N. A. (2018). "Effects of Training on Employees Performance: A study of Bank Sector, Tangail Banoil, Banglodesh". *Globla Journal of Economics and Business*, 4(1), 111-124.
- Obiekwe, O., & Obibhunun, L. (2019). " The Roles of Labour Union in Nigeria Industrial Harmony and Development". *International Journal of Sustainable Development & World Policy*, 8(1), 10-20.
- Okechukwu, U. F. (2016). "Labour Unionism and Wage litigations in Nigeria". *International of Public Administration and Management Research*, 3(3), 28 - 37.
- Okereka, O. P. (2015). Inter-Departmental Relations and Effective Service Delivery in the Local Government System: A Perspective from Nigeria. *Public Policy and Administration Research*, 5 (1), 1 - 5.
- Okereke, S.N. (2021). "*Impact of Contribution Pension Scheme on the Welfare of Retirees in Federal Tertiary Institutions in Enugu State, Nigeria.*" A Thesis presented to the Department of Public Administration, Enugu State University Abakaliki.
- Okolie, U. C., & Agbefe, S. (2020). A Critical Study of the key Challenges of Labour Unionism in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. *International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies*, 7(11), 16-24.
- Okoroafor, G. O. (2013). The Media, Democracy and Labour Unionism in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects. *New Media and Mass Communication*, 17. 79 -89.
- Omeje, P. N., & Ogbu, M. O. (2019). "Impact of Labour Union Strikes on Public Institutions in Nigeria: A study of Academic Staff Union of Universities – Enugu State University, Abakaliki 2016/2017 Strike". *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 24(8), 56-68.
- Onah, F. O. (2015). *Human Resource Management 4th Edition*. Enugu: University of Nigeria Press Limited.
- Otobo, D. (1992). *Further Readings in Nigeria Industrial Relations*. UK: Malthose publishing.
- Shouvick, S., & Mohammed, W.H. (2018) "Loss of Jobs Security and its Impact on Employee Performance : A Study in Sultanate of Man". *International Journal of Innovative Research and Growth*, 7(6), 202 -212.

Ubeku, A. K. (1983). *Industrial Relations in Developing Countries: The Cases of Nigeria*. London: Macmillan.