

LABOUR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN POST-CONFLICT SOCIETY: IMPLICATIONS TO ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY AND PRODUCTIVITY IN NIGERIA FOURTH REPUBLIC

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ABSTRACT

Labour and Industrial relations has its roots in the industrial revolution which created the modern labour relationship by spawning large-scale industrial organizations. As society wrestled with these massive economic and social changes, labour problems arose coupled with societal conflicts and post-conflict reconstruction challenges. Premised on this background, this paper is set to discuss the conceptual meaning of labour and industrial relations, examine the impact of conflict on labour-management relations, assess the roles and prospects of labour in post-conflict society, examine the consequential effects of labour-industrial relations in post-conflict society and investigate challenges in labour productivity in post-conflict society. The paper also discusses some framework for labour-industrial relations in post-conflict society. This paper focuses attention on the changing structure of labour environment and the rise of precarious working conditions orchestrated by various unrests and acrimonies from youth bodies, groups and organizations which has led to the degradation of governments institutions and activities of individuals/groups, where members of the radical liberation groups and movement torments the peace, security and government institutions (especially security agencies) and their personnel. The data for this study were collected through secondary sources. The secondary data were retrieved from textbooks, journals, newspapers, internet materials and literatures from academic journals in relation to the subject studied. The study adopted Industrial Relations Theory as a theoretical framework. The paper concludes that Labour and Industrial relations is one of the critical factors and tools in advancing industrial productivity and attaining sustainable development in modern society.

Keywords: Labour, Industrial-Relations, Productivity, Management, Sustainable Development.

Introduction

From time immemorial, the world has seen many internal and external violent conflicts that dramatically affect the social, economic, and political conditions of the entire populace especially the workforce (labour) population (Yosef Jabareen, 2013). Labour-industrial relations are imperative in terms of organizational productivity and an in-progress debate from the last few decades. The human society is full of conflict. Conflict arises as a result of disagreement between two antagonising parties and classes. With references to the industrial society, industrial conflict is the inability of parties or groups to an employment relations (employer and employees represented by their unions or groups) to reach agreement on any issue connected with the object of employer-employee interactions (Fajana, 2000). Industrial relations can be seen as a cordial relationship between labour and management.

Labour-industrial relations have its roots in the International Labour Organization (ILO) charter or articles which created the modern employment relationship by spawning free labour markets and large-scale industrial organizations. As society wrestled with the massive economic and social conflicts, labour problems arose (ILO, 1999).

Labour-industrial relations have become major elusive and intricate problem of modern industrial society in post-conflict period. During this period labour-industrial progress is impossible without cooperation of labours and pleasant-sounding relationships. Therefore, it is in the interest of all to create and maintain good relations between employees (labour) and employers (government and industry/company) (Fashoyin, 1992).

The expression 'labour-industrial relations' consists of two terms: 'labour' and 'Relations'. "Labour" refers to "any productive activity in which an individual (or a group of people) are engaged". By "relations" it means "the interaction or dealings that subsist within the industry between the employer and his workforce (Frenkel & Harrod, 1995).

Labour-industrial relations are the interactions and dealings between employees and employers within the organizational settings. The field of industrial relations looks at the relationship between management and workforce, especially groups of workers represented by a union, i.e Trade Union Congress (TUC), Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Academics Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and so on. Industrial relations are basically the relationships between employers, employees and government institutions and associations through which such relationship are mediated.

Subsequently, labour unions take their position within the wider labour movement, which consists of several more or less closely and familiarly related organizations. All have the common aims, goals and objectives to increase or advance the cultural, material, physical, and social status of their members. Labour unions have a particular function in this, but relationships between the various parts of the labour movement differ from state to state and from time to time (Allen, 1971).

The intensification of labour organization in Nigeria in recent time has inevitably necessitated a distinct connection between labour union and management. These relationships, broadly speaking, concern the continued existence of the firms in order to achieve the purpose for which it was instituted. The attainment of this goal is largely dependent on the relationship between management and workforce in industry. However, the formalization of industrial relations system in Nigeria does not mean that conflict has been eliminated from industrial relations; forces involving conflict have become more predictable (Ayodele, 1986). Both management and workforce still hold hostile attitude which emphasize soured relationship and maximize conflict between management and workers.

A labour relations system incorporates both societal values, i.e. freedom of association, a sense of group solidarity and techniques (e.g. methods of negotiation, work organization, consultation and dispute resolution). Both public and private interests are at stake in any labour-relation system. The state is an actor in the system as well, although its role varies from active to passive in different countries. The nature of the relationships among organized labour, employers and the government with respect to protection and safety are indicative of the overall status of industrial relations in a country or an industry.

To this end, the paper aims to contribute to the building of strong labour-industrial relations for developing organizations on reconstruction of post-conflict period.

Conceptual Clarifications

Labour

Labour (workforce) is a set of people engaged in or available for work, either in a country or area or in a particular firm or industry. It also refers to workers as a group. Workers in an industry sell their own labour in exchange for an income they negotiate with the management. The Oxford English Dictionary defines labour as “the people who work or are available for work in a country or country”. From the Marxist point of view, the only commodity or property that can be used by the masses or the working class to have their basic needs met is through selling its labour for wages/salary to the capitalist or, rightly put, its employer. The employer and the employee (labour) agrees to a contract in the labour market with conditions centred on the wages, time of work, incentives and a few others which, upon agreement, the labour sells its labour (capacity to work) to the employers to get economic and financial rewards, i.e. salary or wages.

Industry

An industry is the whole of all economic activities by companies, people, organizations involved in the production of goods and services for a particular field. Industries are usually categorized by the goods and services they manufacture or assemble. An industry is also a group of companies that are related based on their primary industrial activities. In modern times, there are dozens of industry classification. Industries are classically grouped into three: primary, secondary and quaternary industry.

Management

Management entails the activities that subsume the skilful integration of both human and material resources, having control and direction over them in order to achieve the

organizational objectives. A manager makes use of the material and human resources, pooling them together, controlling them effectively in order to achieve the objectives and goals of the organization

Industrial Relations

Chrisantus Oden (2020), Industrial Relations as a system of rules which the itemize orders trade union and an employer about the pay and working condition of union regulations collective agreement, arbitration awards, social conventions, management decision and accepted custom practices. Dunlop J.T.'s claim is corroborative of Chrisantus'; he sees industrial relations as the complex interrelations among managers, workers and agencies of governments. Accordingly, Dale Yoder averred that industrial relation is the practice or method of management dealing with one or more unions with a view to negotiate and subsequently administer collective bargaining agreement or labour contract.

Labour-Industrial Relations

The International Labour Organization (ILO) concept of labour-industrial relations deals with either the relationship between the state, employers and workers organization. Labour-industrial relations refer to the formal relationship that exists in the institution between the workers and the management team who represents the owners (employers) of the organization or institution and the government. The labour unions are made up of various associations formed, organized and managed by the employees in the institution or organization.

Bethel and others posited that "Industrial Relations is that part of management which is concerned with the manpower of the enterprise whether machine operator, skilled workers, or manager". *Manpower of the enterprise can, thus, be classified as management and workers or employers and employees and industrial relations can be treated as relations between the employer and workmen.* According to V. Agnihotn, "The term labour-industrial relations explain the relationship between employees and management which stems directly or indirectly from union-employer relationship". V.B. Singh also submits that Labour-Industrial relations are an integral aspect of social relations arising out of employer-employee interaction in modern industries that are regulated by the State in different degrees, together with organized social forces and influenced by prevailing institutions.

According to Wikipedia, labour and industrial relations is the complex interrelations between employers and employees, labour/trade unions employers organizations and the state. In furtherance, the relationship encompasses one between the organized labour, i.e. unionized labour and their employers either in the industry or with the state. The relations' scope extends from employment situations, conditions of service and payment rates. Therefore, the term labour-industrial relation refers to the interactions between employees as represented by Labour Unions such as Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Trade Union Congress (TUC) and so on and their employers such as government and private organizations. Labour-management relations are aimed at the efficient use of human and material resources to increase productivity of an organization.

Industrial Conflict

Industrial Conflicts are characteristics of industrial societies since the revolution era. Conflict is an inevitable part of organizational life because the goals of different stakeholders in the organization often differ and are incompatible. While industrial conflict is bound to exist, its prevalence and re-occurrence in Nigeria express the existence of unhealthy relationship between key actors in an industrial setting (Ogunbameru & Oribabor, 2000).

Literature Review

Labour

Labour in most situations and conditions is frequently looked at as the most effectual of all factors employed for the establishment of wealth and the prospective to build up and assist as a force to all other resources (Yesufu, 2000). The Oxford Dictionary says that labour is the bodily and mental toil tending to the supply of wants of its commodity. Labour has the same meaning with worker, which means any employee who enters into a contract for mutual work. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, labour also could be likened to several human processes and activities. The word - in most sense - is related to employment, unemployment, work, trade unionism and organizational relations.

In both private and public institutions and organizations, a lot of emphasis has been put on labour productivity. Oyeranti, 2003 believes that one reason for this emphasis on labour productivity is possibly that labour is key means/resources which is universal. Some other reasons to justify the use of labour for the purpose of productivity are: labour is the only means of production that has known control over its inputs to output; labour is through to be the most substantial factor of production; and labour is the most measured factor of production (Ayeni and Awe, 2010, ILO, 1996).

Industrial Relations

The concept of industrial relations is recent and can be traced back to the work prepared by Professor John Dunlop in 1958 titled industrial relations system. Dunlop developed one of the largely influential frameworks for explaining industrial relations. He postulates that industrial relations system is "an analytical subsystem of the society" and it entails a study of problems posed by wages, employment and conditions of service to which both workers and their organization; the government and its agencies at all times with the general public must find solutions (Dunlop, 1958).

Subsequently, Industrial relations are connected with the methodical study of all areas of employment (Fajana, 2000). It has been debated to have a related connotation with labour relations. It can be averred that industrial relations are a leading factor that affects productivity directly or indirectly. Industrial relations can be referred to as a combination and mixture of interaction that happen between employer and employee in an organization (Yesufu, 2000). It is also thought that the fundamental issue in all organizations is developing and maintaining an effective and harmonious relationship. For these to be achieved, policy making by consultation, delegation and group dynamics must be implemented (Englama, 2001).

Theoretical Framework

This aspect of the study discusses the theory that forms the framework with which the research work is built. For the purpose of this study, the theory used is Industry Relations theory.

Industry Relations Theory: Industrial relations scholars - Alan Fox being one of them - have described three major theoretical frameworks, which contrast in their understanding and analysis of workplace relations. The three views are generally known as Unitarism, Pluralism, and the Radical or Critical School. Each offers a particular perception of workplace relations; therefore, interpret such events as workplace conflict, the role of unions and job regulation differently. The perspective of the critical school is sometimes referred to as the conflict model, although this is somewhat ambiguous, as pluralism also tends to see conflict as inherent in workplaces, institutions and organizations. The pluralist perspective supports that conflict is inherent in dealing with labour-management relations since different organizations and institutions have different opinions in the day-to-day operations. Consequently, the role of management would lean less towards enforcing and controlling and more toward persuasion and coordination in post-conflict period. Trade unions are deemed legitimate representatives of employees; conflict is resolved through collective bargaining.

The Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Fifty (50) questionnaires were administered to various representatives Trade Union Congress (TUC), Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), Academic Staffs Union of Universities (ASUU), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), International Tobacco Company workers, public and private agencies/organizations and Captains of industries in Nigeria. The entire questionnaires were recovered. The data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) via Frequency and Percentage table.

Table: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

S/N	Respondents Bio Data	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Sex:		
	Male	8	16
	Female	42	84
	Total	50	100
2	Age Distribution:		
	18-25	21	42
	26-40	16	32
	41- 55	11	22
	55years and above	2	4
	Total	50	100
3	Educational Qualification:		
	Primary Education		
	Secondary Education	0	0
	Tertiary Education	3	6
	No Formal Education	47	94
		0	0
	Total	50	100

4	Occupation:		
	Civil Servants	10	20
	Lecturers	5	10
	Labour Leaders	15	30
	Human Rights Activists	5	10
	Private Company Staffs	11	22
	Captain of Industries	4	8
	Total	50	100
5	Religious Affiliation:		
	Christianity	48	96
	Islam	2	4
	Traditionalist	0	0
	Total	50	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Impacts of Conflict on Labour-Management Relations

The organization in the institution where the labour works when management takes place and where the whole relationship between the labour-management took place are not operational outside the influence of the ecological factors: such ecological factors is the state herself, her political practices, the socio-cultural arrangement, the economic condition and level of development, the level of compromise and unity in diversity all greater extent influence labour-management relationship(vertical or horizontal) in conflict and its impact. The labour-management relations and the working environment is not insulated from the great effect of conflict such as ethno-religious conflict, i.e. the conflict that engulfed Plateau State, Borno State and Benue State and the likes in the Northern States. It is expected that if industries with mixed workers of different ethnicity are working in the same industry conflict will be inevitable.

The relationship between the labours (horizontal relations) and the vertical relation between the labour-management will be strained especially where the top managers are from the tribe or ethnic group that are causing the conflict. It's expected that social effect and manifestation of the conflict will soon generate to the industry, thereby worsening and breaking against the structural relationship in the industry. The effects may be latent or manifest, but what remains constant of the labour-management relationship is the breath it gives out to and receives from the public.

Conflict changes economic activity in a number of ways. These changes in economic activity become entrenched after conflict has ended. The available evidence found within the scope suggests the extent to which changes in economic activity become entrenched after conflict situation depend on how developed a country was prior to conflict. A good example is that of the ENDSARS conflict in almost every state in Nigeria as well as the ongoing Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) agitation and activities in South Eastern part of Nigeria occasioned by aggrieved youth and members of separatist and irredentist movements. There are some specific economic challenges faced by countries, states, institutions, organization (private and public sectors) and the entire workforce during and after conflict. Some of them include:

- a. **Private Sectors Decline:** These often continue in post-conflict period, due to skills shortages and problems with infrastructure which make normal operations difficult.
- b. **Labour Market Issues:** Conflict often causes an increase in unemployment and lack of empowerment and a rise in informal activities. These changes generally persist in post-conflict period due to a lack of opportunities.
- c. **Illicit Economic Activities:** Conflict tends to result to an increase in illicit economic activities. These illicit economic activities tend to continue in post-conflict period as those who have been profiting from them are reluctant to abandon uncreative sources of income.
- d. Other economic impact of conflict on labour-management/industrial relations include: capital flight, small tax base, inflation, and so on.

Conflicts and deteriorating relations at workplace have an adverse impact on the overall productivity of the organization. It has added to building up of an environment of distrust among labour and hampers their motivation levels.

Roles and Prospects of Labour in Post-Conflict Society

The roles of the labour in the post conflict period are so enormous that they cannot be ruled out. For instance, taking a cue from what transpired immediately after the Nigeria Civil War that lasted for 30 months (1967-1970), the then military government promulgated a state policy and programme called the 3Rs (Reconciliation, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction). Looking deeply into this 3Rs, it's observed that government and the key practical actors won't be the one to implement it directly, but the Bureaucrats, and if we talk about the Bureaucrats in the 3R's programmes, the job is mostly on the labour, while the top managers manage the whole process.

In a nutshell, when there is a good working environment, incentives from the government, good and unaided labour-management relations and smooth relations with the state, then it's expected of the labour and the top managers to contribute their quota to the national development and stability especially after period of conflicts. To restore the dignity of human life and properties which is a major social conflict, the labour in that sector (such as Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), Trade Union Congress (TUC) and others) must be well organized, and relationship cordially maintained for greater and positive output towards national growth and development.

Analysis of Some Recent Labour-Industrial Conflict and Actions in Nigeria

It's obvious that labour-Industrial conflict and actions in Nigeria are triggered based on numerous factors such as poor management system, inappropriate implementation of government policies and programmes, abnormality in salaries and wages, complicated rules and regulations, poor working conditions and environment, increase in price of essential commodities, and other workers demands, rights and privileges. These unpalatable occurrences usually frustrate labour unions and members of the public and leads to series of industrial actions, protest, strikes and so on.

Labour-industrial actions and conflict in Nigeria fourth republic has always ended up in protests, strike actions with serious economic implications. Various industrial and strike

actions have been organized in Nigeria and all this actions were organized by Trade Union Congress (TUC), Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE), Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT), Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP), Nigerian Medical Association (NMA), Association of Resident Doctors (ARD), Judiciary Staff Union of Nigeria (JUSUN), Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN), Nigerian Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG), Parliamentary Staff Association of Nigeria (PASAN) and so on. These industrial actions and strikes always have negative effect on the citizens and crippled economic sustainability and productivity in Nigeria. The labour-industrial actions have led to closure of schools, scarcity of fuel, high costs in price of goods and services, difficulty in accessing healthcare services in recent times.

Records of Labour-Industrial Actions and Strikes in Nigeria Fourth Republic

S/N	Names of Labour Organizations	Issues that Triggered Labour-Industrial Conflicts, Actions and Protests
1	Trade Union Congress (TUC), Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC)	Nationwide labour strike over fuel price hike, electricity tariffs, non-payment of civil servant salaries, arrears and emoluments. Strikes over deductions of worker's salary in some states,
2	Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE)	Strike over non-payment of staff salaries
3	Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU)	Warning strike over exclusion in Treasury Single Account (TSA), Non-funding of universities revitalization, non-payment of entitlements among others Strike action over the inclusion of ASUU members into Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) and underfunding of Nigeria universities by the federal government.
4	Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP)	Strikes over non-payment of salaries, shortfalls in personnel, unpaid allowances and so on.
5	Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) and Association of Resident Doctors (ARD)	Strikes over dismissal of many health workers, strike over non-payment of salaries owed by government and poor working conditions. The union has crippled medical activities for unprecedented times in Nigeria.
6	Judiciary Staff Union of Nigeria (JUSUN)	In 2021, JUSUN embarked on nationwide strike over financial autonomy of the judiciary at the state level and shutdowns the court nationwide for almost six (6) months
7	Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN)	PENGASSAN nationwide indefinite strikes over disagreement with government in 2016 and 2017

8	Nigerian Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG)	Protest over alleged violation of the country's labour laws and anti-workers disposition of the oil companies
9	Parliamentary Staff Association of Nigeria (PASAN)	In 2021, PASAN fueled a nationwide strike over inability of governors to implement of financial autonomy for state legislatures by state government.

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Implications of Labour-Industrial Relations in Post-Conflict Society

In a state like Nigeria, where the living conditions of workers are appalling and are not being prioritized by those at the helm of affairs, where economic life of labours are miserable and unaccounted for, the labour - through their unionized agitations in their forum such as Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Trade Union Congress (TUC) and so on – have always threatened to strike or embarked on industrial actions. If the government refuse to accede and heed to their demands, however, industrial actions such as strike and protest could result. When such scenarios occur, with valid past events attesting to these facts, it could result in the following (especially when the interest of the labour and public is synthesised)

- a) Economic doldrums and paralysis
- b) Social relations strained: Social suspicion and distrust becomes the other of the day especially internal relationship with industry.
- c) Social and economic activities clampdown: This threatening socio-economic prosperity and prospects for development.

Other consequences of labour-industrial relations in post conflict society are:

- d) Ethnic hostility: This is occurring where there are people from different ethnic in one industry.
- e) Discouragement by the labours to work productively: This is having effects on nation building and national development
- f) The effects on the general public as key sectors are affected such as health sectors (during incessant strike of medical practitioners), unwarranted and unjust detainment of suspected criminals (as a result of strike of Judicial Staffs Union of Nigeria (JUNSUN) and so on.

Challenges Confronting Labour Productivity and Economic Sustainability in Post Conflict Society

Nigeria civil service, private workers/employers, the bureaucrats, the security operatives and apparatus, and other employers especially those working in the government ministries, departments, agencies/parastatals, offices and industry face a great deal of challenges threatening or sabotaging the productivity and efficiency of labour especially in post-conflict era.

The following challenges will be seen if *careful* analysis is done to the nature of labour productivity in post-conflict era in Nigeria starting from the colonial period to present:

- a) Poor political will of leader (especially political office holder and political administrators of government ministries) to cooperate and listen to the agitations of

workers to attend to them. Examples are agitation over IPPIS of Academic Staffs Union of Universities (ASUU) and others.

- b) Poor economic conditions of the workers will surely reduce job satisfaction which in turn affect productivity and efficiency
- c) Inadequate and unhealthy working environment for the labour
- d) Inadequate or obsolete technologies: Old fashion method of productivity still used, coupled with obsolete techniques hampers labour-productivity in Nigeria
- e) Lack of infrastructure for labour in their respective place of works and home such as good roads, uninterrupted electricity supply, communications equipment and technologies. Even where these are available, they are in poor conditions
- f) Poor economic funding of programmes expected to be carried out by the labour. Policy made for implementation but no proper funding for its execution.
- g) Too much pressure from the government, the public, relatives, clients and patrons who ask for bribes and other benefits which are morally not acceptable makes them unproductive.
- h) Corruption and poor working culture of some a workers is equally factor.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is obvious that labour and industrial conflict is still a phenomenon and instant occurrence in Nigeria, and within 1999 till date, there are various occurrence of industrial actions and strikes by labour unions and other groups of organized labour. The labour-industrial relation is still very weak in Nigeria. The study observed that labour in the various sectors, institutions and organizations in Nigeria is unsatisfied with their management regarding working conditions, wages for their work, and the behaviour of the managers at work place, and the welfare packages provided to the staff for their wellbeing. With these predicament of unsatisfied labour in the industries and institutions caused the low level in the productivity of the organizations.

The capitalist-oriented economy has brought about the labour-management dichotomy where there is an imbalance relationship inside the organization and with the outside agency or institutions such as the government which has generated and may continue to generate both internal and external socio-economic and political problem if attention is not given to the labour-management relation considering the important roles of the labour movement in the society, most especially in a post-conflict society.

In critically observing the approaches of government and stakeholders to labour agitations, it is understandable that the country is still engulfed with ineffective labour conflict management and there are loopholes in attending to the overwhelming plights and aspirations of the people at the grassroots, rural and urban centres.

In order to make the labour-employers relationship productive, efficient and valuable to socio-economic development of the nation-state, the following should be done by all stakeholders involved in the labour-management relations: restructuring the labour-management relations to promote balance and free flow of relation vertically and horizontally, unhindered flow of communication between top-managers and the unions and also with the government, putting in place measures to provide for the socio-economic welfare of the

workers in order to forestall future agitations that may lead to strike, reorientation of labour-management on how to maintain unity in diversity, cohabitation and ethnic compromise on healthy living for the sake of the state and individual development, likewise modern equipment and technology should be provided for labour, infrastructure and other forms of social incentives/ securities should be provided In order to promote productivity and job satisfaction.

To bring things to a close, the study recommends that government at all levels, various stakeholders and leaders of organizations, agencies and industries be able to ensure that administrators and chief executives inculcates strategies, skills, mechanisms and principles of conflict management and resolution, this will assist in facilitating quick resolution of labour conflict.

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