

**TRADE UNIONISM AND WORKER ALIENATION IN
NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR WELFARE AND POVERTY
REDUCTION**

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ABSTRACT: The degree to which trade unions' and workers' rights, interests and welfare are protected and advanced in any economy depends significantly on the existence, strength, power, character and legitimacy of trade unionism as the voice of labour and instrument of collective bargaining and conflict resolution in the world of work. This paper attempted to perform a critical analysis of the major issues facing workers and trade unionism in Nigeria, and sought to show the underlying causes of worker alienation and poverty in Nigeria. The objectives of the study are to identify the industrial and labour relations issues facing workers and trade unionism in Nigeria; to ascertain the underlying causes of worker alienation, poverty and insecurity in Nigeria's work environment; and to examine the relationships among collective bargaining, the promotion of workers' welfare and poverty reduction in Nigeria. The study adopted the qualitative method as its methodology for data collection through the use of secondary source, such as text books, journals, magazines, newspaper publications, while content analysis was its method of data analysis. The conflict analytical paradigm of Marxian and post Marxian schools of thought formed its theoretical framework. Inter alia it found that the NLC and the other labour unions are often prevented from representing the interests of the Nigerian workers; trade unions in Nigeria are perceived by governments and other employers of labour as opposition and parallel forces and not given the opportunity to bargain freely for the workers. The study concluded that the NLC needs to strategize the bargaining methods pertinent to coping with the enormous internal and external challenges of 21st century trade unionism, and to disentangle itself with a dogmatic ideological disposition that best describes its present actions and character to end worker alienation and reduce poverty by promoting workers' welfare and trade union rights in the country, especially in the present democratic dispensation. Inter alia, it recommended that, the NLC and other labour unions should be given the opportunity to represent the interests of their members at all times in order to end the present worker alienation, pauperization and abject poverty experienced by the Nigerian workers; recognition of trade unions in Nigeria as legitimate workers' representatives in collective bargaining and grievance procedures by the Nigerian governments and other employers of labour; full, uniform and prompt implementation of minimum wage increases and other workers' welfare policies.

Keywords: Trade Unionism, Workers' Welfare, Worker Alienation, Poverty Reduction, Collective Bargaining, Conflict Resolution

INTRODUCTION

Relationship within the industry or work environment has significant implications for the production process and the level of productivity. On the other hand, production process involves complex relationships that are both harmonious and conflicting, and the diversity of the interests of management and labour makes this relationship inevitable. Workers' right to freedom of association and thus, to take collective action lies at the core of all human rights because it creates the means by which all other rights are asserted and defended.

Many scholars such as Web and Web (1926), Lipset, Trow and Coleman (1956), Weber (1958,1964), Allen (1971), Marx (1975), Beach (1975), and Dahrendorf (1995), have argued that the most important factor contributing to sound labour and industrial relationships is the recognition of trade unionism in any work organization or society by the organization's management. Labour relations involve a problem that every company must face, whether or not its workers are unionized. In this way, the needs of the individual workers can be adjusted to those of the organization. Without unions, employees may find other means of protesting what they think are unfair through slowdowns, sabotage, strikes, absenteeism, loitering, malingering, and quitting the company including other forms of attitudes and behaviours that other industrial operational problems prevalent in our industrial organizations and poor industrial and labour relations practices, policies and mechanism among which worker alienation is prominent.

Beach (1975: 63; 66) contends that traditionalists in management generally do not accord with a real place for unionism in their thinking. Rather they tend to feel that the authority of management should be supreme and that if a union represents the employees, it will try to restrict management's freedom of action, hence the belief that the union will be confined to a role in the affairs of the organization's business as much as possible. Beach further affirms that although not all writers of the modern school discuss unionism, a few do. The newer view accords a more significant role for the union than does the traditional philosophy of management. According to this newer view, the union is not viewed as an "enemy" or a force that exists to make job management more difficult; rather it is recognized that for many sound reasons the union plays a vital role in representing the interests of employees. As a result, many industrial organizations in modern times have shifted emphasis from the human relations school (led by Elton George Mayo) that strongly recognized the significance of group relationships to organizational success and a path-goal approach to improved productivity and industrial harmony.

However, it has been hypothesized that the most successful ones are those that effectively combine the two techniques and approaches in organizational industrial management. The process of managing the workforce in an organization is likely the most important and most precarious of all management functions. The holding of discussions with elected union leaders to make mutually satisfactory decisions on issues such as wage rates, workloads, transfers, promotions, discipline, safety, employee suggestions and conditions is viewed as a legitimate way of managing the workforce. The relationship between management and labour, the existence of an institutionalized framework for conflict management, grievances procedures and collective bargaining, therefore, constitute the concept of industrial relations and culminate in industrial peace and harmony, which is *sine qua non* to effective and efficient production as well as overall national productivity.

Organized labour strongly influences individual work organizations and the economic, social and political climate in any nation. When a union represents the employees of any organization, the policies and practices affecting the employment relationships that were formally decided by management alone are now subjected to joint determination. Wages, hours of work and other employment conditions are gained between unions and management. Thus, the entry of a union into an organization brings with it the establishment of a formalized grievance procedure, thereby providing a means for employees to pay attention to management, and it is the responsibility of the union stewards and top officers who represent the employees to present these problems to management through the collective action of the union.

This paper, therefore, examines the extent to which the NLC as the voice of labour and a representative of Nigeria's workforce has lived up to these expectations of the Nigerian workforce in the face of the ugly challenges related to alienation, poverty and workers' welfare in the country. Generally, this paper focuses on identifying the strengths and weaknesses of trade unionism and the major pressure points that can be used to bring about progress and achieve success in its struggle to expose some of the key features of the national socioeconomic and political variables that challenge the ability of the country to manage its development and improve the wellbeing of its working masses and reduce poverty.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the major industrial and labour relations issues facing workers and trade unionism in Nigeria?
2. What are the underlying causes of worker alienation, poverty and insecurity in Nigeria's work environment?
3. Is there any relationship between the promotion of workers' welfare and poverty reduction in an economy?

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To identify the major industrial and labour relations issues facing workers and trade unionism in Nigeria.
2. To ascertain the underlying causes of worker alienation and insecurity in Nigeria's work environment.
3. To examine the relationship between the promotion of workers' welfare and poverty reduction in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is derived from the conflict analytical paradigm of Marxian and post-Marxian scholars on the nature of society and the alienation of workers. Dahrendorf (1958) began his discussions on conflict theory with three assumptions about the nature of society. The first is that authority is a characteristic of social organization and a general as society itself. This is because, the roles that comprise any organization are

inherently unequal, with the result that their interrelationships always involve the exercise of social power which is commonly legitimized into authority. The second assumption is that authority is inextricably related to conflict. Authority pervades the structure of all industrial societies and provides both the determinant and the substantive of most conflicts. Underlying this assertion is the third assumption that the various roles and positions in any organization can be dichotomized into two quasi groups whose members have totally contradictory interests. These actors according to him, who wield authority, desire to preserve the *status quo*, while those who do not exercise any authority desire to change it at least to the extent of gaining authority for themselves. These two quasi groups which are represented by the capitalist are the labourer, therefore, the production process, is a potential antagonist because their members share common roles and interests, whether or not they are aware of them.

Dahrendorfs's conflict theory correlates with Marx's (conflict) theory of stratification which assumes that society is composed of two classes, that is, the bourgeoisie representing the capitalist class and the proletariat representing the labourer or workers, and that these classes are diametrically opposed to one another and determined by relationships to the means of production (Marx, 1975). According to Coser (1977:48), Marx's theory rests on the premise that the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle. According to this view, ever since human society emerged from its primitive and relatively differentiated state, it has fundamentally divided into classes that clash in the pursuit of class interests. Class interests and the confrontations of power that they bring in their wake are to Marx the central determinant of social and historical processes. Marx's analysis continually centred on how the relationships between men are shaped by their relative positions in regard to the means of production. That is, they have differential access to scarce resources and power. According to Marx (1970), the basis upon which the stratification system rests is the relations of aggregates of men to the means of production. The major modern classes are the class of those who own and control the vital means of production, the capitalists (or the bourgeoisies) and the class that survives through the sale of its labour power, the workers (or the proletariat). The intensified linkage of local social conditions with activities and decisions within world financial commodities and labour markets is increasingly apparent and has devastating consequences.

Relating this to the industrial environment *vis-à-vis* the relationship between the employer(s) and employee(s) or between management and labour, this conflict of interest has always existed. While the employer protects his interest against the worker, the worker advances his interests which borders on his improved wage and other conditions of service. As Marx (1967) observed, the workers are alienated at four levels in the work milieu. First, he is alienated from the surplus value that accrues from production activities by poor remuneration; second, the worker is alienated from the goods he produces that he cannot afford their prices; third, he is alienated from himself by not having enough leisure; and finally, he is alienated from the community of his fellows by not recognizing his membership of the union that represents his interest such as the labour organization. To this I added the fifth, he is alienated from the labour union organization to which he is a member by not being adequately and effectively represented by the labour union especially in collective bargaining. As a result of these privations, the worker suffers so much injustices and unfair treatment relating to his welfare and employment conditions which renders him perpetually alienated and, therefore perpetually poor.

In Nigeria, not only are the NLC and other labour unions that represent the interest of the workers perceived as opposition and antithetical by governments, and other employers of labour, they are often prevented from representing themselves and the interests of the workers thereby perpetuating worker alienation, pauperization and outright poverty. This work which is centred on trade unionism and worker alienation is aimed at examining the strength of trade unionism in protecting, promoting and defending the welfare and rights of workers in Nigeria using the instrument of collective bargaining. It also looks at the extent to which the NLC being the leading labour organization and the voice of labour as well as the umbrella body of all the other affiliate trade unions in Nigeria has positioned itself to squarely address the issues of worker alienation, subjugation and other forms of workplace injustices to ensure improved workers' living conditions, poverty reduction, and national economic development. This is especially in the present socioeconomic hardships and privations facing the Nigeria workers. The conflict analytical paradigm is found to be relevant as the framework for the analysis of this study. Therefore, the study is anchored on the conflict paradigm.

Trade unionism and the Power of Labour in Nigeria

Trade unions are among the most important social movements underpinning democracy. Workers' rights to freedom of association and thus, to take collective action lies at the core of all human rights because they create the means by which all other rights are asserted and defended. For over a century and half, trade unions have fought for the right to decent pay and conditions for men and women at their places of work and for improved social welfare through, for example, health care, education and social security. The generation of struggles for basic democratic rights at the workplace has created in many countries, continents, regions, sub regions and globally free trade union organisations that with thousands of millions of men and women advocating social justice, equity, equality and human dignity among other interests. The issue of trade unionism and the power of labour have been viewed with a mixture of pessimism and optimism by many scholars. Taking a cue from the Marxian perspective led by Karl Marx (1967), the integration of the working class into capitalist society is superficial. Beneath the surface, the basic conflict of interest between capitalists and workers remains. Marx sees both dangers and promise in the formation of trade unions in terms of his hopes for the future of the working class, fearing that the trade unions might be too exclusively bent upon the local and immediate struggles with capitalism. In other words, he observes that trade unions may become preoccupied with furthering the interests of their particular members and in so doing may lose sight of the overall struggle between capital and labour. However, Marx still optimistically believes that trade unions have the potential to become organized agencies for superseding the system of wage labour and capital rule; that by uniting workers in a struggle against employers, trade unions could help to create class consciousness; and that cooperation between labour /trade unions against employers on a local level could lead to class solidarity on national and even international levels.

Sharing Marx's pessimism, Lenin (1969) argues that unions are limited to developing trade unions consciousness, that is, recognition of shared interests by members of a particular union rather than an awareness of the common interests of the working class as a whole. This, he continues, would tend to limit union demands to improvements in wages, hours and working conditions within specific industrial organisations. Like Marx, Lenin fears that trade unions are becoming increasingly self-interested, furthering the interest of their particular members at the expense of other workers. However, he also believed similar to March that these trade unions were a tremendous step forward in the struggle of the working class, but

argued that union consciousness would only be widened by linking unions to political parties representing the interests of the working class as a whole.

Modern Marxists such as Miliband (1969), Allen (1971), and Hyman (1972) are generally pessimistic about the role of trade unions in adequately representing the general interest of labour attributing it to unions' lack of real power. According to Miliband (1969), "when compared to employers, unions have little power". This is because labour does not have direct involvement in decisions related to the production process and generally has no influence at all. He also argues that not only do trade unions lack an effective voice in issues such as what to produce, whether or not to export, whether to invest in what and for what purpose, whether to absorb or be absorbed, they show little sign of demanding one. Hyman (1972: 27–40), in a similar vein argues that management still commands and that workers are still obliged to obey. According to him, although trade unionism permits debate around the terms of workers' obedience, it does not challenge their subordination. According to Allen (1971), "the limits of trade union power are apparent from the analysis of their failure to achieve their basic aim which is the economic protection of workers". In pursuit of this aim, unions jealously protect their right to free collective bargaining, the right to bargain freely with individual employers on behalf of their members. Allen argues that unions cannot properly represent workers through this procedure. He further observes that workers' economic interest can only be furthered by a significant redistribution of wealth. This, he said, would require considerable government interference in the mechanism of the free market economy, thereby leading unions to lose the right to free collective bargaining.

Expanding further on his thesis, Allen states that as it is, unions operate within the free price mechanism, and for this reason are unable to properly represent their members' interests and welfare. By way of example, he claims that even if they win higher wages, the employer can pass on the increased costs by raising the price of his product. By this, worker suffers as a consumer, and the wage rise is thereby wiped out by rising prices thereby alienating him from the commodity he produces and impoverishing him more. He explains free collective bargaining to mean "a situation whereby trade unions compete in the open market". They compete with each other which means that more powerful unions receive greater rewards than do less powerful unions. They also compete with employers, but since they have little control over investment, price and profit and their distribution, Allen (1971) observes, that competition is far from equal. The scenario described by Allen is typical of the Nigerian situation whereby the workers suffer more socioeconomic hardships and privations and increased poverty in spite of increases in minimum wages over the years with astronomical price hikes for goods and services beyond their reach while the unions are helplessly watching.

As a corollary, Hyman (1972) notes that despite their vigorous efforts, trade unions have largely failed to improve the economic position of their members. Of course, this is also typical of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), which, despite all the efforts it has made since its inception, has not been able to achieve a uniform national minimum wage for Nigerian workers among other social benefits that would stand the test of time. Given this situation, it is the position of Allen and Hyman that trade unions cannot realize even their moderate aims of protection satisfactorily without revolutionary change, a change that will involve a massive redistribution of wealth. Allen further revealed that in practice, instead of being directly convinced about the redistribution of income and devising a means to achieve this, unions rather show satisfaction with fractional changes in the money wage rate thereby accepting the

expectations that employers have deemed suitable for them; that by operating within the framework of a capitalist economic system, trade unions accept it and make it legitimate; and that by negotiating with employers, they recognize and accept the system and conditions of employment and wage labour. Against the background of this background, Allen concluded that not only have trade unions acquired aims that are legitimate within the context of capitalist society, but more pathetically, they are limited aims, concerning wages hours of work and working conditions, which can be achieved without unduly disturbing the fabrics of capitalism.

In the same vein, Miliband (1969) had previously admitted that the incorporation of trade union officials into various branches of government has increased pressure upon them to consider the “national interest”, to act reasonably and responsibly instead of radically and oppositionally for the benefit of their workers (members). In practice, he generally means that they (trade union officials) curb and subdue their members’ demands and welfare rather than defend and advance them. This is, of course, the status of the Nigeria Labour Congress when one analyses the unusual romance and hobnobbing of the leadership with the executive arms of government in the present democratic dispensation in Nigeria at both the state and federal levels resulting in its poor performance in promoting the welfare of Nigerian workers. In terms of the national interest, trade union demands often appear selfish, unrealistic, sectional, inflationary, and harmful to the economy and against the national interest. The case of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in Nigeria on the Federal Government for improved conditions of employment which has raised much dust since 2009 leading to frequent and protracted strike actions for its nonfulfillment by the government is a typical example. Also the case of the present NLC and TUC led labour unions' demands of N650,000 and N450,000 respectively national minimum wages for Nigerian workers in 2024 national minimum wage negotiations appears frivolous and utopia hence, the minimum wage negotiations with the federal government appeared to have lingered for several months before being resolved at only N70,000. Miliband thus, contends that the national interest is simply a smokescreen that disguises the interest of capital. He noted that the role of trade unions in government has mainly served to saddle them with responsibilities that have further weakened their bargaining position and consequently have helped to reduce their effectiveness. This is typical of the case of the NLC which has been accused of romancing with Nigerian chief executives thereby compromising the labour and welfare interests of Nigerian workers. In the words of Kerr and Siegel (1954) in whichever ways it is viewed trade unions have always been seen as expressions of industrial conflict and, expressions of industrial conflict, are therefore, as unlimited as the ingenuity of man”. He itemized these industrial conflicts to include strikes, lockouts, sit-ins, working to rule, refusal to work overtime, sabotage, absenteeism, labour turnover, and other industrial operational problems.

From a Marxian perspective, therefore, as evidenced in the above analysis, the so-called integration of the working class into capitalist society has blunted its revolutionary potential, but it has not removed the basic conflict of interest between capital and labour. Thus, the institutionalization of industrial conflict has merely dampened the more violent expressions of conflict while the essential conflict of interest remains. The supposed integration of the working class into the body politic, as the presence of the unions signifies is merely superficial. Society is still irreconcilably divided into opposing groups, capital and labour. As a result, Marxists contend that no amount of integration within the framework of the capitalist economy through the recognition of trade unions or in any guise will remove this division and antagonism. According to this viewpoint, capitalism still remains and involves the

maximization of profit for the benefit of the owners of the forces of production and at the expense of labour through the exploitation and pauperization of the latter by the former. Sharing this Marxist viewpoint on trade unions and the power of labour in capitalist society, Hyman (1972) remarks that unless and until the basic structure of industry and society is radically recast with workers controlling the production process in the interest of human (workers) welfare, rather than being controlled and manipulated by it in the interest of profit, the so-called institutionalization of industrial conflict will of necessity remain partial and precarious. As it were, even the formation of a political party, the Labour Party, by the NLC and TUC that is aimed at representing, protecting, defending and advancing the interests of labour and the Nigerian workers generally maybe said to be merely superficial as it may still not remove the existing antagonisms and irrevocable division, opposition and difference between capital and labour in the country's world of work even if peradventure the Labour Party wind the country's presidential seat. Thus, both the NLC and other labour unions that represent the interests of the workers will not only always be perceived as an opposition and an antithetical forces by governments and other employers of labour in Nigeria, they will always be prevented from representing themselves and the interests of the workers thereby perpetuating worker alienation and outright poverty in Nigeria.

Trade Unionism, Worker Alienation and Workers' Welfare in Nigeria

The production of goods and services holds the key to human happiness and fulfilment. It is generally believed that work is the most important primary human activity. As such, it can provide the means either to fulfil man's potential or to distort and pervert his nature and his relationship with others. Writing on alienation of labour, Marx (1970) believes that work provides the most important and vital means for people to fulfil their basic needs, individual needs and humanity. He contends that by expressing his personality in the creation of a product, the worker can experience deep satisfaction, and that in seeing his product used and appreciated by others, he satisfies his needs and thereby expresses his care and humanity for however, contrary to his expectation, Marx observes that the worker becomes alienated and pauperized from the act of production, his actual work. In modern times this situation, expressed by Marx, manifests itself in varied ways bothering on the welfare of the worker.

Akpuru-Aja (1997) argued that in the 19th century, Marx observed unprecedented progress and development in material production. The Industrial Revolution had reproduced industrial capitalism with the remarkable power of productive forces. In the capitalist system, every production process for increasing the social productivity of labour was brought about at the cost of wage earners, the individual labourer/worker. Unfortunately, the result of industrial capitalism was against labourers. Modern industry and science, he argues, had brought about modern misery and disillusionment. In this circumstance, labour was made an appendage of machine which turned it into a hated toil. The capitalist (employers of labour) provides no suitable human condition for the labourers who work too hard to produce surplus wealth for them; instead, labour was denied it's due reward of social relations of production by making him live from hand to mouth, receiving stipends or compensation in the name of a wage. Aja contends that according to Marx, this condition where by labour which forms the bedrock of material production in a society, is denied his due share of wealth he produces is alienation, which amounts to contradiction of capitalist philosophy on (i) right to life, (ii) right to liberty, and (iii) right to property. This, of course, speaks outright pauperization.

In the same vein, Ake (1985), writing on the linkages between the economic structure and other social structures argues that labour is the fountain of all concepts in the political economy. He further notes that labour is the prime and basic condition of human existence. Hence, by man's labour the fish in the ocean become nourishment, grass and wool become clothing, trees become shelter, and the waterfall generates electricity to heat and light homes and cook food. Like Ake, Popov (1984) had earlier noted that, truly, no matter the rich blessings of nature to man, if man ceases to create and recreate his economic and other material conditions of existence (through labour), he would soon die. Thus, life is sustained by labour. As the worker becomes alienated from the act of production, his actual work, Marx argues, he becomes alienated from himself and has a feeling of misery rather than well-being. Work, therefore, ceases to be an end in itself, as satisfaction and fulfilment of human needs, Marx argues. It simply becomes a means for survival and a means to an end, work cannot produce real fulfilment.

Furthermore, in this thesis, Marx contends that the worker neither owns nor has any control over the goods he produces. Like his products, the worker is reduced to the level of a commodity. A monetary value is placed on his work, the costs of labour are assessed in the ways the costs of machine, and raw materials are. Wage labour, Marx explains, is a system of slavery involving the exploitation of workers. Only labour produces wealth yet workers receive only a part of the wealth they create in the form of wages. Agreeing with Marx's submissions on the subject, Bowels and Gintis (1976) examine a number of the characteristics of production under capitalism claiming that they had developed as a means of control and domination of the workforce. They argue that if the organization of work can be understood, largely in terms of control and domination, why is such control necessary? Primarily, they observe that capitalism is based on exploitation and that profits benefit the owners of the means of production rather than the workforce. Employers are mainly concerned with the perpetration of their class standing, rather than the welfare of their workforce. To maintain such a system, therefore, domination and control are essential since the interests of owners and workers are incompatible and, as such, (they) are sources of potential or actual conflict, antagonism and dissension.

From the aforementioned analysis of the production process and production relations *vis-à-vis* workers' welfare, Bowels and Gintis like Marx regard work as fundamental for the development of man's potential in particular and society at large. They believe that the most important function of work should be "the development of the human potentialities of worker as a social being, as a creator, as a master of nature". In contrast, they remark, "most workers have little chance of developing these capacities due largely to alienation of policies". Bowels and Gintis analysis reveals the volume of the socioeconomic hardship and privations experienced by the present-day workforce in Nigeria and other developing societies with poor remuneration and conditions of service as well as complete absence of the 'social clause', dysfunctional pension schemes specially in Nigeria. Workers suffering and privation occur in the form of poor remuneration, no prompt salary payments, casualization of labour, non-payment of pensions and gratuities to retired workers, dysfunctional contributory pension schemes, poor health and housing policies, etc amidst rising costs and standards of living, no uniform implementation of the national minimum wage, job insecurity, to mention but a few. It is pertinent to ask: what percentage of Nigeria's annual budget and total earnings go to the workforce? Even her anti-labour policies are, of course, alienating and pauperizing instruments and ploys to further oppress and impoverish the worker (Afajan, 1983; Fapohunda, 2004; ILO 2008; NLC 2010; Amadi, 2014).

Contributing to this debate on worker alienation, poverty and pauperization, Gorz (1965) and Marcuse (1972), in their work entitled “alienation from work and leisure”, revealed that existing on subsistence wages, often in appalling living conditions, workers have few means for self-fulfilment in leisure even if they do have the time. Gorz and Marcuse further noted that although Marx first outlined his view on alienated labour in 1844 when workers in industry worked between twelve and seventeen hours a day and as such had little or no time to perform their animal functions, which Marx described as eating, sleeping and procreating, they argue that even now, the working hours per day have drastically reduced to an average of 8 hours a per week in most industrialized and industrializing nations including Nigeria, there has been a steady rise in the living standards of the population as a whole making it difficult for workers to self-fill even in leisure. Thus, in a capitalist society, people are alienated from both work and leisure. Gorz and Marcuse, therefore, argue that capitalism has strengthened its hold over the workforce since, by alienating men in their work, it is better equipped to alienate them as consumers; conversely, it alienates them as consumers the better to alienate them at work. After seeing the suffering of workers in both capitalist and socialist/communist societies in Eastern Europe, Marcuse (1972) not only saw work as exhausting, meaningless, stupefying and inhuman slavery but also saw the potential for personal development of the worker crushed in advanced industrial societies. These situations expressed by Marcuse are not only the same in developing and underdeveloped societies such as Nigeria; they are also worse here.

According to the functionalist perspective on the division of labour in society, Haralambos and Holborn (2008) quoting Durkheim (1947) had previously observed that needs are false if they do not result in true-self-fulfilment and real satisfaction. Durkheim (1947) sees occupational associations (trade unions) as the means to subject economic activity to moral regulations. According to him, freely elected administrative bodies on which all occupations in the industry are represented should govern various industries. These bodies would have the power to regulate whatever concerns the business such as the relations of employers and the employed, that is, the conditions of labour, wages and salaries, and the relations of competitors one to the other. Such associations, he continued, would solve the problem of anomie in two ways: first, they would counter individualism by reintegrating individuals into a social group, which would re-establish social controls; second, by establishing a consensus about the rewards various members of society could reasonably and justifiably expect, and normative limits would be placed on individuals' desires. These concerns, Durkheim concludes, would form the basis for rules to regulate economic activity. According to this view, Durkheim refers to trade unions as imperatives for healthy industrial and labour relations and industrial harmony, and as the voice of labour in the world of work.

Differing slightly from the stance of Durkheim on the imperatives of trade unions in promoting and protecting workers' welfare, Goldthorpe and Lockwood (1968) in their work orientation, argue that the general lack of close attachments results from workers' instrumental orientation. They define work simply as a means for making money, not as a place for making friends or leisure. This definition of work also shapes workers' attitudes toward trade unions. Goldthorpe and Lockwood (1968) further argue that four-fifths (4/5) of all workers believe that trade unions should limit their concern to obtaining higher wages and better working conditions. They refer to the affluent workers' relationship with their unions as instrumental collectivism, meaning that the affluent worker joins a trade union with his fellow workers for instrumental reasons, with the union being regarded as a means to personal end. Based on this orientation, most workers do not see union solidarity as a

worthwhile end in itself, nor do they think unions promote radical change in society as a whole.

Following from their earlier position, Goldthrope and Lockwood reveal that what happens outside the factory is more important in shaping workers' behaviour and attitudes than what happens inside. According to them, workers assign priority to on-going changes in working class life outside work and, most notably, in this respect, changes within the family. They also revealed that workers are increasingly home- and family- centred largely because of their high living standards and because family life is more inherently rewarding, which means that workers can satisfy their expressive and affective needs through family relationships; as such, they are, therefore, less likely to look to work for their satisfaction. They concluded that "The more family life becomes a central life interest, the more the worker will see his work in instrumental terms; hence, it (work) will increasingly become a means to raise family living standards". However, due to the prevailing conditions of the Nigerian workers, the only notable changes that have occurred to the family of average Nigerian workers poverty and hardship, indigence and necessitation, privation and pauperization.

In a similar development, in a study entitled "In search of the new working class", Duncan Hallie (1978) discovered that in British refineries, workers who largely identified with management were concerned with their interest and welfare and not simply with profits for the benefit of shareholders. The implication of these analyses is that at any time a worker's welfare and interest are threatened or jeopardized, he sees work as unfulfilling, unsatisfactory and therefore, alienating and pauperizing. Thus, the position of functionalists is that trade unions form the major groups representing the interest and welfare of employees in general and the manual working class in particular. Additionally, from the pluralist perspective on the nature and distribution of power in society, functionalists believe that power is dispersed among a variety of interest groups, including labour unions. A number of sociologists who support the pluralist stance have argued that largely through trade unionism, the working class has been integrated into capitalist society. As a result, conflict between employers and employees has been institutionalized in terms of an agreed upon set of rules and procedures. The net result, therefore, is increasing stability in industrial society. No longer is the working class seen as a threat to social order, as Marx believed, and there is less chance of the kind of class conflict Marx predicted.

As Ralf Dahrendorf (1959) rightly argues, pluralism provides an opportunity for success for every interest that is voiced. He believes that the voice of the working class is growing louder through its formal associations-trade unions. This he says, signals a trend towards a more equal balance of power between employers and employees and the development of what will be termed "industrial democracy". Industry democracy begins with the formation of workers' interest groups—the labour unions (Clegg, 1960). In particular, interest groups are necessary to represent workers since employers cannot negotiate with a disorganized collection of employees. For workers' interest groups to be effective, they must be recognized as legitimate by employers and the state. This has been an uphill struggle in capitalist societies such as Nigeria and other third-world nations. Dahrendorf (1959) further revealed that even in nineteenth-century Britain, employers strongly resisted the formation of trade unions, often insisting that their workers sign a document declaring that they were not union members. Additionally, in America, particularly during the 1930s organized crime syndicates were sometimes employed by companies to prevent their workforce from experiencing trade unionism. However, by the latter half of this century, he continues, trade unions were

generally accepted as legitimate by employers and the state. This period, Dahrendorf notes, was the major step towards industrial democracy and the institutionalization of industrial conflict. The opposite is the case in Nigeria. Trade unions are perceived by governments and employers as opposition and antithetical forces (Yesufu, 1984; Olaitan, 2000).

Upholding the view of Dahrendorf, Haralambos et al. (2013) observed that with the formation of workers' interest groups, a number of processes occurred that furthered the integration of the working class into the structure of the capitalist society. These they adumbrated to include the following: first, the setting up of negotiating bodies for formal negotiation between representatives of employers and workers, which negotiations, they add, take place within a framework of agreed upon rules and procedures; and conflicts are largely contained and resolved within this framework; second, the institutionalization of a machinery of arbitration in terms of which outside bodies mediate between the parties in dispute, should negotiations breakdown; third, formal representation of workers within each company, for example, by shop-stewards who represent their interests on a day-to-day basis; and finally, the tendency towards an institutionalization of workers' participation in industrial management. In these ways, they argue that voice of labour is heard in capitalist enterprises and that there is a trend towards "joint regulation" of industrial management by workers and employers. A typical and good example of this scenario in the work milieu is the case of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in Nigeria and the Federal government, which has been in industrial dispute at different periods due to repudiation of collective agreements by the government and lack of compromise by the two sides over the issues in dispute leading to repeated and lingering months of protracted strike actions by the trade unions, thereby stifling academic programmes in public universities in the country. Additionally, the NLC and other labour unions are relevant in this circumstance. Although the NLC has not quite embarked on strike actions as a national umbrella labour union in the country, particularly since the inception of the present democratic government, even when there have been justifications for such actions, representatives of labour /trade unions such as the NMA and NULGE have done so in pursuit of the welfare of their workers.

Lipset (1959) and Allen (1971) earlier contributed favourably to our understanding of the integration of the working class into capitalist society and the larger body politic by acknowledging the establishment and recognition of trade unions as representing the voice and general interests of labour. As Allen (1971) rightly observes via trade unions, the interests of the working class are represented at the highest level, and in this way, the working class as a whole is integrated into the larger body politic, especially in democratized societies such as America and Britain, where trade unions are actively involved in decision-making processes. He illustrates further by reiterating that in these two democracies, trade union officials (i) sit regularly on government advisory committees; (ii) cabinets have regular meetings with members of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) to discuss important issues of national and international policy; and (iii) union officials ever find their way to the House of Lords.

Like Allen, Lipset (1959) had synoptically noted that trade unions serve to integrate their members into the large body politic and give them a basis for loyalty to the system. Not only is the reverse the case in Nigeria, with the NLC being the only central labour union in the country; the NLC is perceived as a 'parallel government' to the existing political structures by governments and even by some members of civil society. For example, bailing his mind over the actions of the NLC over the Federal Governments controversial fuel tax policy,

Tunji Abayomi, a Lagos-based constitutional Lawyer, was reported by Asaju and Adeleke (2004) to have described the NLC as a parallel government. He also said that there is nowhere in the world where the labour union sits with the government to decide on such public policy matters as fuel increase. In a similar development, apart from placing security operatives at alert to monitor the movement of labour leaders across the country and effecting their immediate incarceration, the government bluntly refused to sit with labour to resolve the imbroglio from the controversial fuel tax on the ground that it was its prerogative. Similarly, in Imo State, the NLC President, Mr Joe Ajero was in 2023 beaten to stupor together with some of the national and state labour officers during a state wide protest organized by the NLC against unfair and unfavourable policies and practices of the state government such as non-payment of pensions and gratuity to retired workers, indiscriminately salary payments, salary shot payments and outright non-payments to serving civil and public servants, middling in labour management by the state government, over delayed promotions of workers among many other issues(Family Love Enugu FM News, 2023).

Evidence to support the view of trade unions as major and effective interest groups is provided by the economic benefits and rights they are seen to have won for the welfare of members and workers in general. It is also argued that these unions are responsible for increases in earnings, improvements in working conditions, longer holidays and shorter working weeks. Along with these economic benefits, unions are largely responsible for establishing and extending the rights of workers. These observations are consistent with the contention of Allan Flanders (1968) that the most enduring social achievement of trade unionism is its creation of a social order in industry embodied in a code of industrial rights. Against the background of the foregoing, therefore, the following questions are pertinent as regards the extent to which the NLC has performed its statutory roles as the voice of labour in Nigeria, particularly in democratic dispensation (1999-2023). To what extent is workers' discipline subjected to agreements drawn between management and trade unions in Nigeria? Stemming from (i) above, can management in Nigerian industrial organizations no longer fire their staff at will without recourse to labour laws and agreements? To what extent were the rights of workers defended and protected by the NLC in the country, especially in the democratic period of 1999–2023? These constitute the code of industrial rights, which should be the primary concern of the NLC and its leadership as the central trade union and the voice of labour in Nigeria.

Nigeria requires full-fledged worker interest groups (trade unions), especially representing workers' interests and welfare at all times. This is a situation in which industrial conflicts are institutionalized and the working class fully integrated into Nigeria's capitalist enterprise, government and society as a whole and a situation in which more disruptive sources of social and economic conflicts are removed, resulting in more stable, virile, independent and free trade unions with dependable, proactive, purposeful, goal-seeking and goal-oriented, democratic, transparent and honest leadership or trade union management in Nigeria.

Collective Bargaining, Promotion of Workers' Welfare and Poverty Reduction in Nigeria

The essence of management of trade unions at any level and in any economy, therefore, is to accomplish unions' goals and objectives which are basically to advance or promote the interest and welfare of their members such as to work towards a better life for their members, ever increasing standards of living; more leisure time; and financial protection against many

of the risks of life, namely, sickness, unemployment, retirement benefits and rights, job security, job rights, and opportunities for advancement (Kreitner, 2002). Unions also advocate government legislation to improve educational opportunities, obtain better housing and improve protective labour laws, health and medical insurance. These factors singly and generally constitute workers' welfare and thus reduce general poverty (Kreitner, 2002).

According to Katz and Kochan (2000), there are two principal means through which trade union leadership seeks to fulfil its labour leadership goals. First and foremost is collective bargaining, whereby the union, through its leadership, serves as the representative of the employees in the negotiation of formal written agreements with the organization's managements representing employers of labour. Collective bargaining also includes within its compass the day-to-day administration of the agreements, the enforcement of the collective agreements and the resort to collective action such as strikes and picketing where necessary. The second is through efforts to influence government legislation through grassroots campaigns to elect the friends of labour to political offices, lobbying and the dissemination of mass information to mould public opinion in favour of the general masses. The accomplishment of these goals and objectives not only guides the behaviour of trade unions but also expresses their effective and efficient management (Beach, 1975; Katz and Kochan, 2000).

Akpala (1982) and Fashoyin (1992) strongly agreed earlier that Nigerian trade unions have had major problems structuring themselves into types that would give them strength and some kind of order for responsible participation in industrial and labour relations. According to these schools of thought, the trade union's responsible participation in industrial and labour relations involves, as in any other institution, administration or management, a coordinated process of relationships in authority and responsibility down and up the hierarchy of the organization. It involves the guidance, leadership and control of individuals' efforts towards certain common goals so that the organization can achieve its objectives with minimum expenditure of resources and effort and the least interference with other worthwhile activities (Akpan, 1982; Fashoyin, 1992).

One other point of interest about Nigerian trade unions is the observation that union management finds itself in a constant problem of sorting out the striving for participation in collective decision-making and in administration and executive actions (Akpala, 1982). Union administration, therefore, is the same as union government or union management, and it involves almost the same kind of functions as administration or management in business organisations, namely planning, organizing, coordinating, directing and controlling (Akpala, 1982). All institutions carry out these functions if they care to be successful or adopt some of them to fit into their circumstances (Fashoyin, 1992).

Scholars such as Annene-Nduka (2000) and Bakvis (2002) have strongly and equally argued that collective bargaining in both theory and practice has undergone dramatic changes worldwide during recent decades and even presently in terms of patterns, methods and outcomes. To this end, Jordan (1996) immediately observed that for workers generally, globalization is changing the whole structure of their contractual relations with their employers in many different ways as well as the role of the state and thus tripartite relations involving the government, employers and employees' representatives. Additionally, the individual worker is still at a considerable disadvantage in his or her relations with an employer unless he or she is able to call on the collective support and protection of the

worker through trade unionism because trade unions, through their unions' management or leadership, now face the challenge of finding ways and strategies to influence and shape the new national and international environments that affect the labour markets, labour relations and new ways of bargaining with employers who are incidentally less interested in standardized collective agreements that fit into standardized systems of production.

The greatest problem in collective bargaining vis-à-vis workers' welfare, especially in a developing state such as Nigeria, is that labour agreements resulting from collective bargaining processes are not considered by organizations' management and governments as binding on them, with the effect that often times they are not fully implemented, if at all, and in most cases repudiated (Kassalow, 1982; Fashoyin, 1992) with utter disregard of their implications for workers and the general masses. Similarly, Annene-Nduka (2000) also contended that, with the exception of the first and second republics and, surprisingly, the military regime of Babangida 1989-1993, which sought to embrace the principles of voluntary collective bargaining, other militaries as well as Obasanjo's democratic dispensation of 1999-2007, fostered and nurtured either guided industrial democracy or deregulated/regulated collective bargaining to control the practice of industrial and labour relations among its social partners. Kassalow (1982), Fashoyin (1992) and Annene-Nduka (2000) described collective bargaining in Nigeria, both in the private and public sectors, as "concessionary bargaining", during which both employers and trade union leaders are more likely and willing to agree on areas of common interest, thereby substantially compromising the interest and welfare of workers.

The ILO (2008) affirms that there is currently legislation or binding collective bargaining regarding the minimum wage in more than 90% of countries of the world. One argument is that fixing of the minimum wage affords workers a reasonable income to meet their basic needs and raise their standard of living. Another argument is that by introducing the minimum wage, employers are not only hindered from using unreasonably cheap labour; rather, they are encouraged to use human resources more efficiently and, therefore, increase productivity. However, it is still further argued that the success of the minimum wage in its intended goal will depend, apart from the criteria used, on the level at which it is implemented. The International Labour Organization (ILO) (2009) observes that ultimately, the impact and usefulness of a minimum wage policy depend on whether minimum wages are paid. This in turn, depends on the effectiveness of the enforcement mechanisms, penalties for violations, adequate compensation for workers whose rights have been infringed upon or violated and suitable resourcing by the enforcement authority. It further states that the active involvement of social partners, government and labour leadership in both the design and operation of minimum wage enforcement regimes is essential to enhancing their impact (Fapohunda, 2004).

Income policy is usually a principal component of welfare boosting and poverty reduction and a macroeconomic policy framework in Nigeria, and minimum wage legislation is a major income policy that readily employed in this regard. Although it has both negative and positive effects on the overall economy, policy makers, especially the political class, have used the fixing of the minimum wage more often for political rather than socioeconomic reasons. Hence, there are problems associated with full and timely minimum wage implementation in Nigeria. As is obvious with Nigeria, minimum wage legislation has been preceded by high inflation rates that actually erode purchasing power and reduce in workers' and general welfare. As a result, it is justified as a means of adjusting the wages and salaries

of workers to match the prevailing rise in the cost of living. According to Owoy (1994) and Ojo (1998), another unfortunate aspect of wage adjustment or increase in Nigeria according to is that it is always followed by threats of reduction in the government and private workforce, and in some cases, such threats have actually resulted in massive layoffs in public/civil services, thereby increasing the poverty level.

The ILO (2008) in its meeting of experts on minimum wage fixing and workers' welfare vis-à-vis poverty reduction and other related problems explained that the concept of the minimum wage contains three basic ideas, namely, that the minimum wage is the wage considered sufficient to satisfy the vital necessities of food, clothing, housing, education and recreation of the workers, taking into account the economic and cultural development of each country; that the minimum wage represents the lowest level of remuneration permitted in law or fact, regardless of the method of remuneration or the qualification of the worker; and that the minimum wage is the wage that each country has the force of law to uphold and that is enforceable under the threat of penal or other appropriate sanctions, noting as it were, that the minimum wage fixed by collective agreements made binding by public authority is not precluded in the above explanations. Efforts to implement such a concept, therefore, imply an attitude or a policy that aims at improving the material and economic situation and condition of workers and guaranteeing them a basic minimum standard of living that is compatible with human dignity. Unfortunately, the case of Nigerian workers is worse in regard to the above requirements resulting from non-full implementation, late implementation, outright refusal to implement or conditional implementation tagged with workforce downsizing, thereby impoverishing workers more. A typical case is the 2015 and 2019 minimum wage, which many states in Nigeria have refused full implementation across board, with approximately six states outright refusing to implement 3 years after. Even the 2024 minimum wage fixing may likely suffer the same fate.

Collective bargaining never played any significant role in wage fixing and labour relations, especially in the public sector in Nigeria. In fact, the government, as the largest employer of organized labour, has negatively affected the practice of collective bargaining through its employment practices and actions to the extent that public service negotiating councils were never allowed to negotiate wages and salaries in civil/public services, rather, they were restricted to discussing on labour problems. Instead, wages and salaries were based on the recommendations of Wage Review Commissions established by the government. An aftermath of implementation of the recommendations of the committee and panels is usually, fraught with problems ranging from refusal to pay, further negotiations by states on what to pay, and stultifying delays in prompt implementation to a jump in the general price level of goods and services, which eventually denude the said increase in normal wages, thereby bringing about a reduction in workers' purchasing power, untold hardships and general poverty. Consequently, instead of solving the problem of the workers, it has not only aggravated them but also led to new waves of agitations for salary increase in the country.

The minimum wage was redefined in 1991 to embrace total emolument, and at the same time, the universal applicability of the minimum wage to all public sector departments and government levels was discontinued. Thus, each government department/level was advised to pay according to its financial capacity without regard to the fact that all workers in the country are exposed to the same market forces in all the states. At the beginning of 1993, an increase of 45 percent was effected in public sector workers' salaries. The increase was ostensibly meant to cushion the inflationary effects of the rapid depressing and depreciating

naira (against major international currencies such as the US dollar and the British Pound Sterling) following the deregulation of the foreign exchange market in March 1992. By September 1998, the Federal Government issued a directive to increase the prevailing minimum wage and other levels of wages, especially in the public sector perhaps due to its concern for workers' welfare. The implementation of the directive resulted in an increase in the nation's minimum monthly wage from ₦363 to ₦3000, and it also led to a substantial increase in the take home pay of all other categories of employees. Following agitation for some increase in wage by the Nigerian Labour Congress in 2000, the Federal Government again increased the minimum monthly wage from ₦3000 to ₦5500. This minimum wage act of 2000 also made provisions for a review of the minimum wage every two years. In September 2003, the Federal Government announced a regressive wage increase of 12.5 percent for the lowest paid workers, while those at the top were 4 percent. In August 2010, the Federal Government fixed a minimum wage of ₦18,000, and took effect in January 2011. Nigerian workers have struggled for improved wages and national minimum wage legislation. However, in 2017, the Federal Government fixed the national minimum wage at ₦30,000 which took effect beginning in 2019. Given its resources and level of development, Nigeria ought to be paying one of the highest minimum wages in sub-Saharan Africa, however, in reality, it pays one of the lowest.

The objective of minimum wage fixing as set out in the ILO Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970 (No.131) and its accompanying Recommendation No. 135 is to provide wage receivers with necessary social protection in terms of minimum permissible levels of wages. These objectives were already implicitly or explicitly contained in previous ILO conventions No.26 and Recommendation No.30 (applicable to traders) and Convention No.99 and Recommendation No.89 (applicable to agriculture) which stipulate that the minimum wage should not be fixed at a lower rate than one that would ensure the subsistence of the worker and his/or her family; the minimum wage, along with other measures of common and social policy aims at reducing poverty and meeting basic needs. However, minimum wage fixing alone cannot succeed without satisfying the minimum needs of all workers which has spiral general effects on society. Similarly, the ILO (1996) observes that minimum wage fixing is often associated with one or more of the following four purposes. The first is bringing the lowest wages up to the general level of wage paid for similar work; the second is exerting upwards pressure on the general level of wages as a whole; the third is eliminating unfair competition; and the fourth is serving as a policy tool aimed at promoting rapid growth and equitable distribution of national income.

Modern sector wages and salaries in Nigeria are principally and singularly determined and regulated by the administrative decisions of the government, wage commissions, and prices and income policies (1996). This practice contradicts and contravenes the ILO recommendation No. 135 which identifies certain criteria or factors to be taken into account in determining the level of minimum wages, such as the needs of workers and their families, the general level of wages in the country, the cost of living and changes therein, social security benefits, the relative living standards of other social groups, and economic factors including the requirements of economic development, levels of productivity and the level of employment, and the capacity of pay by the various sectors involved in the implementation of the policy. The basic needs of workers and their families have to do with measuring poverty levels and the basic needs of households (especially of wage earners households) using data on average expenditures by low-income households on various household goods and services.

As noted Amadi (2014), other factors involved in improving and enhancing workers' welfare and, by extension, general wellbeing in an economy include regular promotions, improved allowances, the provision of a housing scheme, a car loan scheme, a car refurbishing loan scheme, a mortgage housing policy for workers, the allocation of empty plots to workers for personal development by the government, in-service training programmes (study leave with pay), the refund of medical expenses and/or free medical treatments, the implementation of a new national health insurance scheme, the full implementation of a new contributory pension scheme, the prompt payment of pensions and gratuities to retired workers, periodic salary increases, etc. Unfortunately, these workers' welfare improvements are not given the attention they deserve from the government and other employers of labour in Nigeria, leading to worsening workers' social and economic conditions and those of their family members. This situation is worse during democratic dispensation (post 1999) than in the military era (pre 1999) (Amadi, 2014).

There is no gain in saying the fact that the plight of Nigerian workers with regard to their welfare has worsened at presently, with much indigence and necessitation. With the spiral inflation rate caused by the recent removal of petroleum subsidies, the high cost of commodities and services, house rent and building materials, including plots of land, transportation, education, coupled with the weakening of the purchasing capacity of the naira and the poor remuneration and high unemployment rate, Nigerian workers and, by extension the general populace live below the subsistence level. The labour market situation, in Nigeria is such that there are too many people chasing too few jobs, to the extent that the level of unemployment and poverty in Nigeria today is unprecedented. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2021), as of September 2018, urban unemployment was more than 22.8% in many states of Nigeria, and increased from 22.8 percent in the third quarter of 2018 and to 33.3% at the end of 2020 (NBS, 2021). Sadly, some organisations including governments, have a culture of unfair labour practices, such as the casualization of labour and poor remuneration, and it would seem that they try to exploit every available opportunity to oppress, repress, enslave and pauperize Nigerian workers. This is evidenced by non-full and, in most cases, outright non-implementation of the minimum wage and other workers' welfare schemes aimed at improving their living conditions and reducing poverty. Even those Nigerians who are lucky about being employed find it increasingly difficult to survive their monthly pay because average Nigerian worker is one of the lowest in the world. Workers in the public sector are particularly worse off. Apart from the various forms of alienation confronting and experienced by Nigerian workers, their pay and other employment conditions have continued to deteriorate, thereby impoverishing them more.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the qualitative method as it's methodology for data collection and analysis by making use of secondary source of data from text books, journals, magazines, newspaper publications, online materials and other official documents relevant to the study.

Findings

1. The NLC and other labour unions are often prevented from representing themselves and the interests of the workers, thereby perpetuating worker alienation, pauperization and outright poverty in Nigeria.

2. Trade unions in Nigeria are perceived by governments and other employers of labour as opposition, antithetical and parallel forces, and as such, not given the free hand and an ample opportunity to bargain freely in the interest and welfare of their members, the workers, unlike the case in most other countries.
3. Implementing such policies as the minimum wage increases and other workers' welfare policies and programs that are aimed at improving the material and economic conditions of workers means guaranteeing them (the workers) basic minimum standards of living and reducing poverty in Nigeria.
4. Trade unions are an important factor in ensuring that the welfare and interests of labour are promoted, protected and defended in any economy.
5. Labour unions, governments and the management of industrial organizations in Nigeria, are not responding adequately positively, if at all, to the challenges of economic adjustment policies as they relate to trade unionism, workers' alienation, workers' welfare and poverty reduction.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

It is evident from these empirical and theoretical analyses that labour unions, governments and the management of industrial organisations in Nigeria are not responding adequately positively, if at all, to the challenges of economic adjustment policies, as they relate to trade unionism, worker alienation, poverty reduction and workers' welfare. However, to effectively address these challenges, industrial and labour organizations need to emphasize, within broad-based industrial relations policy, cooperative and collaborative approaches such as in the case of Japan where trade unions are an integral part of government and industrial organization. That is, while acknowledging the inherent conflict between labour and capital, which is apparently irreconcilable, employers' industrial relations policies and practices in Nigeria should seek to elicit cooperation and collaboration with trade unions. It is obvious, however, that adopting a conflictual model such as the framework for planning and action will undermine the ability of the two sides to respond positively and jointly to the challenges of the 21st century, which favour harmonious industrial labour relations and codes of industrial rights and improved productivity.

However, while appreciating the vagaries and vicissitudes of the economic, social and political environments, as well as the changing local and international economic conditions and variables, for example, global economic recessions caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic, etc, it seems obvious that the framing of responsive labour laws and policies in Nigeria should, first acknowledge the pertinence of the human element (resource) (the worker) factor in the organization, which is employee-centred. This, of course, defines industrial relations from a broader perspective beyond the view of a contest between two antagonists but rather one that embodies the traditional industrial relation institutions of collective bargaining, along with policies in the design of compensation, grievance procedures and communication systems. These represent the ingredients of humanistic employers' industrial relations policies and practices required in the 21st century world of work and beyond.

On the part of trade unions, there are, however, three interrelated and interdependent issues that the policies and strategies of trade unions must address both in this century and beyond to be able to respond adequately to the challenges of the era and take advantage of the positive aspects of government and employer policies in the country, especially during the

present democratic dispensation. The first is internal self-reappraisal which is necessary to grapple with and minimize or completely eliminate the derisive and antagonistic characteristics prevalent in the Nigerian trade unions, particularly the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC), such as internal division, disunity, factionalism, competition and acrimonious relationships, which have resulted in woeful failure to provide timely and noteworthy service to the members. The second is organizational strategy which involves making explicit and progressive organizational strategies to cope with and effectively address some of the consequences of environmental and structural changes, the methodologies adopted by trade unions in response to fundamental changes in the economy and the structure of the labour market, particularly the expansion of employment, the type of counteracting policies and strategies to be developed against the anti-union or union avoidance policies of governments and employers, the best ways unions can respond to the yearnings and interests of their members and what these constitute, and how unions can evoke the interests of workers in trade unions and union activism and sustain such interest. The third is ideology and values orientation which indicates the need for strategic planning of union activities and programmes that are intrinsically related to and, to a large extent, dependent on the ideological values of trade unions and their leaders.

Conclusion

Stemming from the above elucidations and findings, and to overcome internal derision and its adverse consequences in the Twenty First Century and beyond, there is a great need for the acceptance of pluralistic democracy in union management, especially at the national level and within the Nigeria Labour Congress. Additionally, the recognition of individual rights, divergent views or organized opposition within an acceptable constitutional framework is needed for the NLC to be able to ward off unnecessary and destabilizing external interferences. Furthermore, for the NLC to be able to carefully and thoughtfully address these and other emerging issues, it is imperative that it go beyond traditional principles and orthodox organizational strategies on the types of programmes pertinent to coping with the enormous internal and external challenges of 21st century trade unionism and adopt new methods of bargaining by making cross-cultural comparisons and analyses on labour matters with facts and figures on national socioeconomic and political issues and trends for effective and fruitful collective bargaining.

There is no doubt that these issues will remain prominent in achieving great success in 21st century trade union activism. The options available, however, are whether the NLC should remain entangled with a dogmatic ideological disposition that best describes its actions and character vis-à-vis the promotion of trade union rights and workers' welfare in the present democratic dispensation in Nigeria or adopt practical and pragmatic approaches and policies that are inevitable in dealing with and responding adequately to the socioeconomic imperatives of the 21st century trade unionism.

Another challenge here is for managers of human resources, especially in their organized institutions in Nigeria, to convince governments of the advantage of consolidating the tripartite arrangement, instead of using it as an ad hoc instrument for solving industrial and labour relations problems, which does not augur well for the country.

Equally important is that sociopartners must be actively involved both in the design and operation of minimum wage enforcement regimes to enhance their impact; better still, the minimum wage should be determined through collective bargaining instead of unilateral government fiat, which is a common practice in Nigeria to forestall industrial crisis, which is common in the country.

These imperatives, therefore, call for a philosophical approach that will accommodate or emphasize cooperation within the inherently nonfactual system of relationships. In other words, the most realistic approach would be one not built on conflict and on concessionary bargaining which seems to characterize the present approach of the Nigerian Labour movements headed by the NLC.

However, due to time constraint and limited space, the study could not delve properly into and exhaustively discuss the suitable and effective collective bargaining strategies to be adopted by the Nigerian labour movements led by the NLC and TUC in the 21st century trade unionism for effective performance in promoting workers' welfare, reducing poverty and eliminating worker alienation in Nigeria. The study, therefore, suggests that further studies should be undertaken on "the strategies and methods for collective bargaining for effective performance in trade union management and promotion of workers' welfare in Nigeria", in order to fill the gap created in this study.

Recommendations

1. Giving the NLC and other labour unions the opportunity to represent the interests of their members (the workers) at all times: The NLC and other labour unions should be given an ample opportunity to represent themselves and the interests of the Nigerian workers in order to end the present worker alienation, pauperization and abject poverty and other socioeconomic hardships and privations experienced by Nigerian workers.
2. Recognition of trade unionism in Nigeria as legitimate workers' representative in collective bargaining and grievance procedures: The Nigerian governments and other employers of labour should recognize and perceive trade and labour unions as legitimate and true representatives of the Nigerian workers, allowing them free hand to bargain freely in the interest of their members, the workers, rather than perceive them as oppositions, antithetical and parallel forces. This will make for effective collective bargaining agreements and conflict resolution in Nigeria's work milieu.
3. Full, uniform and prompt implementation of such policies as minimum wage increases and other workers' welfare policies in the country: Efforts should be intensified by the Nigerian labour movements headed by the NLC and TUC for full, uniform and prompt implementation of minimum wage increases and other workers' welfare policies and conditions of employment aimed at improving workers' welfare and reducing poverty in Nigeria.
4. Trade unionism to be seen as an important factor in ensuring effective collective bargaining and promotion of workers' interests and welfare: Trade unions should be seen as an important factor in ensuring effective collective bargaining and that the welfare and interests of labour are promoted, protected, defended and advanced in the Nigerian economy.
5. Tackling and responding adequately to the challenges of economic adjustment policies affecting trade union rights and workers' welfare: Nigerian labour movements, governments and managements of industrial organizations should respond adequately

positively to the challenges of economic adjustment policies affecting the Nigerian workers as exemplified by the recent government's removal of subsidies on petroleum products without providing palliative measures to cushion its effects, leading to untold economic hardships and privations of the Nigerian workers and general populace.

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