

TRADE UNIONISM AND WAGE AGITATIONS IN NIGERIA: THE NIGERIAN LABOUR CONGRESS

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ABSTRACT

Trade Unions emerged from the efforts of workers to seek improvement on existing working conditions through collective actions. They function to provide social, economic, political and psychological benefits for their members as well as the platform for participation in managerial functions in the industry. Today's unions are no more mere bargaining agents or lobbyists but rather transformed into a social movement through which the working class has promoted mass democracy. In the face of persistent agitation for wage increase, this paper examines the factors that propel wage agitation; and the challenges NLC faces in the clarion call for wage increase. A total of four hundred and ten (410) workers in wage employment were selected for this study, using a random sampling technique. In-depth interviews were held to compliment the use of the questionnaire administered. The research reviewed some literature and based on the Pluralist and Marxist perspectives. The findings revealed that abject poverty; wage discrimination and incessant call for wage review are the major propellers of agitation for wage increase. The study therefore recommends improvement on social services in the areas of health care, education, housing, transportation and other social infrastructure. This will reduce the incessant clamour for wage increase.

Keywords: Trade Union; Wage Agitation; Causes; Challenges; Prospects

INTRODUCTION

All over the world, trade unions have become important agents of socio-economic transformation and class struggle always representing the working class interests against capitalist exploitations. In the contemporary times however, especially in the developing countries, trade unionism has become an indispensable tool in ensuring and guaranteeing industrial harmony between the employer and employee. It is a well known fact that trade unions all over the world emerged to improve the living and working conditions of workers.

In Nigeria, trade unions fought against colonial rule and exploitation of the Nigerian State during the colonial period. The activities of trade unions, under the umbrella of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) have been responsible for the reversal of government actions and policies. NLC now plays social, economic and political roles not only to the working class but to all Nigerians both the employed and unemployed.

Traditionally, trade or labour unions are constituted to protect and champion the cause of workers (Fashoyin, 1992). As one of the important social partners in the industrial relations system, labour unions have helped to collectivize, project, and protect the views, yearnings, interests and aspirations of workers in a bid to improve their terms and conditions of employment within the industrial relations system. Negotiation and collective bargaining, which are modern and effective machineries for ensuring industrial peace and harmony within an industry, are also part of the mechanisms put in place to regulate the relationship between labour, employers, and the state with labour movements playing a central and critical role in the process, especially on behalf of employees. Apart from the traditional role of securing better "deals" for its members, labour unions have also had to expand their industrial relations role to include looking out for the welfare of

workers and citizens within the larger society (Alalade, 2004). As Iyayi (2008) contends, labour movements in Nigeria have evolved into a robust, intellectual, vibrant, militant, national liberator movement in the country, taking on successive military and civilian regimes. Such issues include, among others, minimum wage, the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), electoral reforms, political party issues, education-related issues, fuel price hikes, better conditions of service for workers, external debt, cost of living and corruption, (Anyanwu, 1992; Asiodu, 1980). Though the powers of the labour unions to influence wages, working conditions and to defend workers have eroded enormously and tend to be quite weak nowadays, it would be wrong to write off African trade unions. In many countries, trade unions remain a political force to reckon with, as they continue to be one of the very few societal organizations in Africa with a sizeable constituency. Over the past decades, Nigeria has been experiencing a phenomenon politicization bordering on general strikes against price hikes on state subsidized petroleum products, anti-third term rallies and other social and economic issues called for by the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC). This has equally led to the creation of a trade union supported political party (Labour Party) which participated for the first time with its own candidates in the local elections in 2004.

In fact, all over the world, labour movements through their activities and constant defense of workers and members of the society, have forced sit-tight, dictatorial and fascist regimes to accede to the demands of labour. This paves way for the gradual increase in wage earnings, improvement in the employment conditions of workers, change in draconian government policies, election of popular politicians, and installation of popular mandates and the adjustment of harsh economic policies, like the 1980's SAP in Nigeria; thus making such policies more humane and supportive of the lives and economic interests of the generality of the citizens. As Iyayi (2008) avers, labour unions in Nigeria have gone beyond their traditional role of championing the cause of workers by wielding much political and social influence and acting as a vigilant watchdog for the people. Although this has brought labour unions and their leaders into ugly confrontations with the political and ruling classes, most times it leads to convulsive repressions and strangulation of labour leaders and the proscription and de-proscription of labour movement activities, however, the difficulty in keeping faith with their role as the vanguard of labour and an advocate of the people's cause is justified by the many victories won in the process of vicariously serving their constituencies.

The gulf between the rich and the poor is getting wider every day in Nigeria because of wage discrimination. The worker is perpetually conditioned in wage situation that is only enough to multiply his/her race. While political office holders continue to line their pockets with fat wages, that are generated from the sweat of the worker, the average Nigerian worker can hardly feed his/her family. According to Cheeka (2009) a sizeable proportion of Nigerian workers receive starvation wage, and over 75 per cent of them live in abject poverty. Hundreds of thousands of working class live in rotten tenements and cannot access or afford medical services. It is increasingly difficult for workers to send their children to school. The new height of poverty among workers in Nigeria could be responsible for the waves of industrial disputes in recent times. Plethora of studies in Nigeria revealed that those who are privileged to be employed are finding it increasingly difficult to survive on their monthly wages. Their take home pay cannot take them home. In the face of increasing inflation of about 14 percent, the Nigerian worker is one of the least paid in the world (ASUU-NEC, 2005, Agba, 2007; NLC 2009).

The precarious situation of workers is even more worrisome as they have to support relatives and dependents that are unemployed. As the proportion of the unemployed increases in the face of disproportional increase in wages the hope of workers surviving with their relatives/dependents dwindles. Wage situation and the strife to survive among employees especially in the public sector are particularly worse off; being a civil servant today, means signing bond with poverty. The fear of retiring at the instance of low income and facing uncertainty in a society with poor social security system, escalate and intensify all forms of agitation and corrupt practices even among law enforcement agents (Agba, Ikoh, Ushie & Agba, 2008).

Wage induced industrial disputes in Nigeria is alarming. The proportion and frequency of these disputes are unprecedented (Agba, Ushie & Agba, 2009). These incessant industrial crises are not without consequences, the irregular school system, declined in economic growth and development in Nigeria is often associated with strikes (Agba & Agba, 2008). Other consequences include diversion of attention or efforts

among workers, ill-relationship between employees and management, man-day lost, decrease in productivity and health costs (Oshimole, 2009; Agba & Ushie, 2010). While these facts are crystal clear there are little or near absent research work on trade unionism and wage agitation.

The concern of this paper therefore is to investigate factors responsible for wage agitation by NLC; challenges/prospects of wage agitation by NLC; and to proffer solutions to the identified challenges.

AREA OF STUDY

Nigeria is a Federal Constitutional Republic comprising 36 States and its Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Nigeria is located in West Africa and shares land borders with the Republic of Benin in the west, Chad and Cameroon in the east, and Niger in the north. Its coast in the south lies on the Gulf of Guinea in the Atlantic Ocean. Nigeria has a total area of 923,768km² with a population of 174,507,539(NPC, 2013 estimate). Nigeria lies between latitude 4⁰ and 14⁰ N and longitude 2⁰ and 15⁰ E

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

For clarity purposes, the key concepts in this paper need to be well defined and clarified. First is the issue of **trade union**. Several attempts have been made to conceptualize trade unions based on the viewpoints of some apologists coloured by their experiences, environment, prevailing economic and political ideologies, and so forth. Thus, different definitions have been advanced in an attempt to elucidate what a trade union is. A few of these viewpoints shall be considered in order to adopt a working definition that best represents this paradigm. According to Obasi (1997), as politicians organize themselves into political parties for purpose of seeking and capturing state power, so do workers organize themselves into trade unions primarily for the purpose of improving their material condition through increase in salary and better conditions of service.

A trade union therefore is a group of workers whose major aim is to seek for improvement in the material conditions of its members (Obasi, 1997:6). "A trade union is an organization of employees formed to bargain with the employer" (Wordnet, 2009). A trade union has also been conceived as an organization of workers formed to protect the rights and advance the interests of its members concerning wages, benefits, and working conditions (Labour Relations Commission, 2009). From the Stewards Dictionary (2009) a trade union is defined as "Workers organized into a voluntary association, or union, to further their mutual interests with respect to wages, hours, working conditions and other matters of interest to the workers." Labour Union (2009) rather gives us a more lucid and elaborate description of what a labour movement is: "A trade union or labour union is an organization of workers who have banded together to achieve common goals in key areas such as wages, hours, and working conditions. The labour union, through its leadership, bargains with the employer on behalf of union members (rank and file members) and negotiates labour contracts with employers. This may include the negotiation of wages, work rules, complaint procedures, rules governing hiring, firing, and promotion of workers, benefits, workplace safety, and policies. The agreements negotiated by the union leaders are binding on the rank and file members and the employer and in some cases on other non-member workers." Also the Trade Union Act of 1926 and Trade Union Decree of 1972 in Nigeria define a trade union as "Any combination of persons, whether temporary or permanent, who come together for the purpose of regulating the relations between workers and employers, worker and worker, or for imposing restrictive conditions on the conduct of any trade or business."

According to the International Confederation of Free Trade Union (ICFTU, 2009) trade union is seen as "a continuing and permanent organization created by workers to protect themselves at work, to improve their working conditions through collective bargaining, to seek better conditions of their lives and to provide a means of expression for the workers' view on the problems of society." Based on the foregoing conceptualizations trade union can therefore be viewed as "a continuous and permanent association of wage or salary earners formed for the purpose of maintaining and enhancing the conditions of their work life through the provision of several economic and social safety nets within and outside the work environment." This definition takes into consideration the very important variables that are central and germane to the existence of labour movements, capturing one of their overriding objectives for their membership, i.e.

improvement of working conditions. It also points to the fact that trade unions, as we see in Nigeria, have gone beyond their traditional call of duty of protecting workers' rights to fighting opprobrious and unpopular policies of government, thus putting pressure on government to deliver more social and economic benefits to workers and the citizens.

The definition of trade union by ICFTU(2009), is reflected in the following objectives of trade unions: to secure and enhance the general living conditions of workers and the economic well-being of their members; to guarantee individual and collective job security against all possible threats occasioned by market fluctuation, technological changes or organizational policies; to influence policies reached by the government on issues pertaining to the workers, through their relationship with politicians and the elites in society; to relate with labour unions at the local and international levels; to continually guarantee freedom of association and the recognition of labour union rights on all unionized workers.

Wages: Wages are often defined as returns to labour. They are payments at regular, weekly, monthly or other intervals plus allowances such as those for working overtime, leave bonuses, adhoc bonuses and other similar payments paid to employees by employers as specified in employment contract (Wikipedia, 2011a). It is the direct payments received for work done in a particular establishment. Wages could also be seen from the employees' perspective as all costs incurred for the recruitment and use of employees in a given establishment. It includes among others – direct wages, fringe benefits, social security benefits and cost incurred for human resource training and development.

Wages are means for an acceptable quality of life in a given country. In this regards, wages are classified into three groups – subsistence wage, living wage and fair wage (Navamukundan, 2011). Subsistence wages are remuneration that provides for the subsistence needs of the worker. Living wages are payments that provide for subsistence and means for a quality of life which is socially acceptable in a given society, while fair wage is remuneration which is reached through negotiations based on factors such as opportunity cost of labour, labour market conditions and the general cost of living. Fair wage is between living wage and subsistence wage. Wages may also be regarded as fixed regular remuneration paid to an employee on daily or weekly basis especially to a manual or unskilled worker (Wikipedia, 2011a). It is monetary remuneration computed on hourly, weekly, or piece work basis, paid to a worker by the employer. Fixing of wage is a controversial subject especially as it involves determining minimum wage (Neumark & Wascher, 2006). In Nigeria, minimum wage has been an issue that is politically contentious and which have generated face –offs between organized labour unions (Nigeria Labour Union) and the federal and state governments. Increase in minimum wage often results to retrenchment of staff and escalations of industrial crisis in Nigeria.

The third concept that deserves clarification is **Agitation**: *Agitation* is the act of stirring things up, like the *agitation* of a washing machine that moves the water, detergent, and clothes around and gets the dirt out or the *agitation* of political activists who want people to work together to do something,(Vocabulary.com,2010).

THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE STUDY

This paper derives its theoretical foundation from the Liberal-Pluralist theory and the Marxist theory. Pluralism had developed in western democracies with the aim of explaining the nature and distribution of power in those societies. Its central position is that power is distributed among various groups in the society. This is based on the assumption that the organization is composed of individuals who constitute distinct sectional groups, each with its own interests, objectives and leadership (Ratnam, 2007). This leads to a complex of tenuous and competing claims which have to be managed in the interest of maintaining a viable collaborative structure.

The Liberal-Pluralist Theory recognizes three different actors in an industrial relations system. These are the labour (trade union) representing the interests of workers, employers' association (management) representing the interests of employers in the organized private sector and the state (government) representing the interests of the state/government. This perspective goes on to posit that these tripartite actors are assumed to be interacting in a cooperative way towards the realization of the objectives of

the entire organization as well as those of the various actors. As Dunlop (1958) argued, each of the actors has its own ideology (interest) and the notion of a pluralist industrial relation system. As opposed to the unitary perspective, the pluralists see conflicts between management and employees as rational and inevitable. Common interest and mutual dependence are seen to be a necessary condition for the survival of the whole of which they are parts.

According to Haralambos and Holborn (2000), pluralism's starting point is that industrial society increasingly differentiated into a variety of social groups and sectional interests. Pluralism is therefore politics of interest groups with each pressing for its own advantage. As no one group is seen as being dominant, politics therefore becomes that of bargaining and compromise (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000). Such interest groups involved in bargaining and compromise are trade unions as well as professional associations.

As trade unions are the major groups that represent the interest of employees in any work organization, they have been able to use the ideology of pluralism to integrate the working class into the capitalist society. This is so because conflict between employers and employees has been institutionalized and regulated. This in turn has led to industrial stability as the relationship between capital and labour has moved from adversarial to the level of cooperation as either strives for its own survival. According to Dahrendorf, (1959) both sides are expected to gain from opportunity of pluralism (cited in Haralambos and Holborn, 2000). This he believes would lead to a more equal balance of power, between both employers and employees and the consequent development of what he calls industrial democracy.

THE MARXIST PERSPECTIVE

Marxism is a method of socioeconomic analysis, which analyzes class relations and societal conflict, this approach stresses class relations and conflict irreconcilability. Specifically, the Marxists perspective to the understanding of industrial relations has a history that dates back to the Marxist conception of history and society. This thesis simply posits that society is divided into two major contending classes, namely: the bourgeoisie (that is, the haves) and the Proletariat (that is, the have not's). The Wealthy class which owns the means of production and as such constitute the capitalists class which exploits the proletariat class. With respect to organizations, the employers or owners of the organizations constitute the wealthy class. Furthermore, this thesis holds that these two major classes are involved in social unrest which culminates in social revolution. Those who are exploited are angry while those exploiting them are happy, thus, there is a class struggle. The class struggle the theory espouses will only end when the exploited class overthrows the exploiting class thereby taking over power in the organization in order to institute an egalitarian society.

Marxists see industrial relations in terms of the struggles for power between labour unions and employers of labour. In other words, this theory sees industrial relations occurring within a dynamic conflict situation, which is permanent and unaltered as long as the structure of society remains the same. According to this perspective, trade unions may at times find out that without political actions, the economic, social, and educational objectives would not be realized. Thus, it welcomes the idea that unions should be politically active and conscious by supporting the struggle to reform or even overthrow an unjust government. Beyond reforming, the Marxist theory calls for actions to restructure the existing capitalist order and replacing it with an egalitarian society.

TRADE UNION IN NIGERIA

Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) is an umbrella organization for trade unions in Nigeria. It was founded in 1978 following a merger of four different organizations: Nigeria Trade Union Congress (NTUC), Labour Unity Front (LUF), United Labour Congress (ULC) and Nigeria Workers Council (NWC). The numerous affiliated unions were restructured into 42 industrial unions. Its founding President was Wahab Goodluck.

During its history, conflicts with the military regime twice led to the dissolution of the NLC's national organs, the first in 1988 under the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida and the second in 1994, under the regime of General Sani Abacha. Under Nigeria's military governments, labour leaders were frequently arrested and union meetings disrupted. Following democratic reforms in the country, some of the

anti-union regulations were abolished in January 1999. The same month Adams Oshiomhole was elected President of the reformed organization.

Today, the NLC has 29 affiliated unions. In total, they gather around 4 million members, according to their own figures. This makes the NLC one of the largest trade union organizations in Africa.

AFFILIATES TO THE NLC

1. Agric and Allied Employees" Union of Nigeria (AAEUN)
2. Amalgamated Union of Public Corporation, Civil Service Technical and Recreational Services Employees
3. Maritime Workers Union of Nigeria
4. Medical and Health Workers Union of Nigeria
5. National Association of Nigeria Nurses and Midwives
6. National Union of Air Transport Employees
7. National Union of Banks, Insurance and Financial Institution Employees
8. National Union of Chemical, Footwear, Rubber, Leather and Non-Metallic Employees
9. National Union of Civil Engineering, Construction, Furniture and Wood Workers
10. National Union of Electricity Employees
11. National Union of Food, Beverage and Tobacco Employees
12. National Union of Hotels and Personal Services Workers
13. National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas (NUPENG)
14. National Union of Posts and Telecommunication Employees (NUPTE)
15. National Union of Printing, Publishing and Paper Products Workers
16. National Union of Shop and Distributive Employees
17. National Union of Textile, Garment and Tailoring Workers of Nigeria
18. Nigeria Civil Service Union
19. Nigeria Union of Civil Service Secretariat Stenographic Workers
20. Nigeria Union of Journalists
21. Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE)
22. Nigeria Union of Mine Workers (NUMW)
23. Nigeria Union of Pensioners
24. Nigeria Union of Railway men
25. Non-Academic Staff Union of Educational and Associated Institutions
26. Radio, Television and Theatre Workers
27. Steel & Engineering Workers Union of Nigeria (SEWUN)
28. National Union of Road Transport Workers
29. Nigeria Union of Teachers

Source: Nigeria Labour Congress, (2009)

RESEARCH METHODS

The design of the study is a descriptive survey. According to Nworgu (1991,p.58),descriptive surveys are those studies which aim at collecting data and describing in a systematic manner, the characteristics, features and facts about a given population. Four hundred and ten (410) members of five trade unions were selected through a random sampling technique. The five unions chosen for the study are the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT), the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), the National Association of Nurses and Midwives of Nigeria (NANMN), the Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE), and the National Union of Food, Beverage and Tobacco Employees (NUFBTE). These unions are among the twenty-nine (29) industrial unions that emerged as a result of the restructuring exercise of trade unions and as listed in the Trade Unions (Amendment) Act. 1996. The sampled unions fall into different sectors of the Nigerian economy. For this study, the twenty-nine (29) industrial unions were grouped into five (5) sectors with related occupation/services, viz Educational, Health/Medical, Public Service, Mass Communication and

Economic/Transport. From each group, a random selection of one industrial union was done leading to the selection of the five (5) unions that serve as case studies for the research. To elicit data from the selected respondents, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used.

For the qualitative data, data were derived from previous researches, conference papers, journals and the internet. On the other hand, for the quantitative data gathering, structured questionnaire and interview were used to elicit data from 82 respondents that were randomly sampled from each group making a total targeted population of 410. Data generated from distinct sources were analyzed descriptively using percentages and ranking.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Series of questions were posed to respondents in order to assess their opinions on the causes of wage agitations by NLC and presented in Table 1. The data show that about 29.3 percent of the respondents identify disparity in wages between political office holders and the Nigerian workers as the major cause of wage agitation by NLC. This is understood within the context of the fact that the disparity in wages between political office holders and the Nigerian worker is worrisome, and this situation is further aggravated by the frequent increase in politician's compensation packages. According to Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC, 2009), political office holders continue to line their pockets with fat wages, that are generated from the sweat of the worker, the average Nigerian worker can hardly feed his/her family; 24.4 percent identify abject poverty. This is based on the claim according to Cheeka (2009) a sizeable proportion of Nigerian workers receive starvation wage, and over 75 per cent of them live in abject poverty. Hundreds of thousands of working class live in rotten tenements and cannot access or afford medical services. It is increasingly difficult for workers to send their children to school. The new height of poverty among workers in Nigeria could be responsible for the waves of industrial disputes in recent times. 19.5 percent of the respondents support the idea that Nigerian workers are the least paid (wage discrimination).

The Nigerian worker is one of the least paid in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Despite the huge revenue accruing to government from crude oil, the Nigerian worker earns as average of 550 dollars per annum (i.e 90,750 naira now), only above countries like Madagascar, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Malawi. The minimum wage of the worker in Botswana is five times more than that of a Nigerian worker. (NLC, 2009:4). Naira devaluation and inflation, poor social security system and wide gap between the rich and the poor attract low response range of between 14.6%, 7.32% and 4.87% respectively. Disparity in wages between political office holders and Nigerian workers ranked first among the 7 causative variables, followed by abject poverty. None of the above ranked 7th (0%) in the series.

Table 1: Causes of Wage Agitation

Causes	Total Response	Percentage	Ranking
Wide gap between the rich and the poor	20	4.87	6th
Abject poverty	100	24.4	2nd
Wage discrimination	80	19.5	3rd
Poor social security system	30	7.32	5th
Disparity in wages between political office holders and the Nigerian workers	120	29.3	1st
Naira devaluation and inflation	60	14.6	4th
None of the above	0	0.00	7th
Total	410	100	7 Items

Source: Author's Research (2015)

CHALLENGES OF WAGE AGITATION

Discounting for the causative factors discussed in a section of this work. Respondents also identified diverse factors that impede the realization of one of the goals of NLC (wage agitation). In the earliest times, the

Nigerian Labour Congress, had faced similar historical challenges when it drummed out the working population into the streets in the demand for working conditions. The result summarized as table 2 shows that poor enforcement capacity; inflation and incessant and differential call for wage review are the major challenges that affect the actualization of wage agitation by NLC which together constituted 276(67.4%). The respondents insist that legislative backing of the minimum wage act is very important. Without the ability to enforce the process, the whole exercise would be in vain. The enforcement of the minimum wage act should include effective enforcement mechanism, appropriate penalty for offenders and compensation to workers whose rights have been violated.

According to the respondents the main argument advanced by the organized Labour to demand for rise in pay (i.e. the worthlessness of the former minimum wage due to inflation) is also the main plank advanced by opponents of increase in minimum wage. Their reason is that whenever there is a wage increase, inflation eventually erodes the purchasing power of the worker who had just had a wage increase. Towing the same line of argument on the negative consequences of perennial wage increase, the respondents are of the view that continuous wage increase is not justifiable. In fact it is ruinous to the economy. It leads to general and persistent rise in the price of goods and services, and reductions in the number of jobs available. This finding affirms International Labour Congress (NLC, 2012) assertion that poor enforcement capacity; inflation and incessant and differential call for wage review are the major challenges of wage agitation.

Table 2: Challenges of Wage Agitation

Challenges	Total Response	Percentage	Ranking
Inflation	88	21.5	2nd
Poor enforcement capacity	102	24.9	1st
Incessant and differential call for wage increase	86	21.0	3rd
Insufficient revenue	30	7.3	4th
Moribund Ministry of Labour and Productivity	17	4.1	7th
Backlashes	20	4.9	6th
Globalization	15	3.7	8th
Unavailability of statistics	12	2.9	9th
Non-performance	10	2.4	10th
Non-unionized workers and contract staff	30	7.3	4th
None of the above	0	0.0	11th
Total	410	100	11 Items

Source: Author's Research (2015)

PROSPECTS OF WAGE AGITATION

The organized labour in Nigeria had since the 1940s developed a reputation for militant defense of workers' rights and policy advocacy in issues that concern the working population. Beside the challenges facing NLC in the quest for wage agitation, attempts were equally made to identify some prospects to the realization of wage increase. 44% of the respondents advocate for living wage, since minimum wage was no longer realistic. A living wage is more than money, it is something about the force of a moral proposition; first, that work should be rewarded; second, that no one who works full time should have to live in poverty. A living wage is seen as a decent wage. It affords the earner and his family the most basic cost of living without need for government support or programmes, 40% suggest the issue of legal challenges must be addressed. Without adequate legal backing minimum wage does not only fail to achieve its aim it ends up as mere recommendations which is subject to the acceptance or otherwise of the parties. This will help workers and their union officials to effectively exercise their rights under the minimum wage legislation, including the right to recover amounts by which they may have been underpaid; and adequate protection of workers against victimization for doing so. 11% of the respondents are of the view that the federal government should increase revenue allocation to states. The states too need to cut down on the many frivolous expenses in the annual budgets, especially the security votes which are conducted through which tax payers money end up in

private pockets. The over-bloated cabinet of the governors can be appropriately stream lined and the huge salaries and allowances of public office holders, including that of the governors, brought down to save more money for the state, while the remaining 5 % suggest that accelerated action should be given to the unionization of all non-unionized workers in several sectors of the economy. The result shows strong alliance to the causative factors discussed in a section of this work.

CONCLUSION

Trade unions or organized labour in Nigeria has come a long way in enhancing the economic well-being of its members. From the discourse, it is imperative to note that disparity in wages between political office holders and the Nigerian workers; abject poverty and wage discrimination are some of the factors that propel NLC to agitate for wage increase. The study conclude by imploring the relevance of the Nigerian government to treat its workforce very well so the country can have solid economic base that is diversified for its many socio-economic activities; and that federal government should approve special grants to enable the various tiers of government pay.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the course of this research, the following recommendations were proffered:

- State Governments should find ways of harnessing the abundant human and natural resources in their states. They should also endeavour to cut down on basic running costs and put a check on corruption and other practices that impact on their finances.
- Trade Unions in the clamour for wage increase should consider the economic and financial status of the nation.
- Government should improve on social services, especially in the areas of health care, education, housing, transportation and other social infrastructure. This will reduce the incessant agitation for wage increase.
- Over dependence on oil revenue is inimical to the economic growth of the country. This has a great negative impact in the processing of the new national minimum wage. Non-oil sectors of the economy should be harnessed.
- Inflation militates against the minimum wage process. Economists and other stakeholders should find viable ways to check inflation.
- Minimum wage should have adequate legal backing; this will help workers and their union officials to effectively exercise their rights under the minimum wage legislation.

*Note: This paper was first presented as a seminar paper on the course title **INDUSTRIAL RELATION AND PUBLIC POLICY***

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