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# Effect of Strategic Labour Unionism on Workers Welfare in Enugu State Public Service

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**Abstract:** *This study is titled “Effect of Strategic Labour Unionism on Workers Welfare in Enugu State Public Service. The researcher sought to ascertain the extent to which labour unionism has guaranteed job security for workers in Enugu State; determine the extent to which workers unions have assisted to ensure timely promotion of workers in Enugu State; investigate the contributions of workers unions on regular provision of training programmes for workers in Enugu State; and ascertain the extent to which effective labour unionism has assured timely payment of pension and gratuities to retirees in Enugu State. Pluralism theory propounded by Flanders and Fox (1970) was used as the theoretical framework of the study. Secondary sources of data collection were utilized. Materials generated were analyzed contextually. The outcome of the study showed that effective unionism is lacking in Enugu State from 2015 till date consequent upon the harsh political environment under which unions operate in the state. Hence, Welfare of workers such as job security, timely promotion with commensurate financial benefits, regular training programmes and pension and gratuities benefits are hardly provided as and when due. All these have resulted to poverty, hunger, lack of interests to assigned responsibilities, etc among workers across government establishments in Enugu State. The researcher recommended among other things that labour unions in Enugu State should persuade government institutions in the state to ensure adequate provision of workers welfare in order to improve the socio-economic wellbeing of the workers toward higher performance in the organizations; unions should seek redress in industrial court with regards to any infringement on the rights of any worker in the state as this has yielded result in the past.*

**Key words:** *Labour, Labour Union, Workers’ Welfare*

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## Introduction

Globally, workers form unions to enable them determine and pursue their common interests. Odey and Young (2008) cited in Stephen and Emeka (2014) defined trade or labour unions as permanent and continuing democratic organization voluntarily created by workers to protect themselves at their work place and to improve their working conditions through collective bargaining, membership and education, political lobbying and campaigning etc, and to provide an effective means of expressing workers views on societal problem. Labour unionism is a trade union organizing method through which all workers in the same industry are organized into the same union regardless of skill or trade, thus giving workers in one industry or in all industries, more leverage in bargaining and strike situations (Wikipedia, 2020). It is a part of a wider concept of the labour movement- which consists of several more or less intimately related organizations such as labour parties, worker’s mutual insurance organization, producer’s and consumer’s cooperatives by way of improving the material, cultural and social status of their members. The actual operation of union activities and persistent struggle for the welfare of workers constitutes the central issues in labour unionism.

Unionism is therefore said to be effective when it promotes peace and unity among members. Effective unionism projects and promotes members at all times. It entails unionism that adheres to internal democracy, where members are recognized as parties in progress and where equity, fairness and justice prevail. It connotes leadership that is devoid of rancor, bribery and corruption; and where union executives are committed to the welfare of the workers as their primary concern. Above all, effective unionism determines and pursues the welfare of members in order to improve their socio-economic well being.

Over the years, workers welfare tops the primary goals of labour unionism. The Encyclopedia of social sciences quoted in Dushar (2019) defines welfare as “the voluntary efforts of the employers to establish, within the existing industrial system, working and sometimes living and cultural conditions of the market”. So, the term welfare refers to all facilities and comforts given by the employer to employees as may be required by the law, the customs of the industry and the conditions of the market, apart from wages, salaries and incentives. Among other things employee welfare includes job security, promotion, regular training, housing, medical and educational facilities, facilities for rest and recreation, day nurseries and crèches, insurance measures leave/holidays with pay undertaken voluntarily by the employers, and would also include schemes like provident fund, gratuity, and pension, etc.

However, in contemporary labour management relations, welfare packages are backed up by laws and conditions of service because of their importance to employee job performance on one hand and the overall performance of the organization on the other hand. For instance, Section 173 (1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended provides that “the right of a person in the public service of the federation to receive pension or gratuity shall be regulated by law”. The Nigerian labour laws, Training ITF ACT, Cap 19, LFN 2004, as amended by the Industrial Training Amendment Act, 2011 (the “ITF ACT”) establishes the Training Fund (the ITF). The purpose of the ITF is to promote the acquisition of relevant skills in industry or commerce with a view to generating a pool of indigenous manpower to satisfy the needs of the economy (Banwo and Ighodalo, 2018).

Scholars such as Dursha (2019) and Ugo and Sebastine (2020) among other things state that the objectives of employee welfare include to: enhance the level of morale of employees; create loyally contended workforce in organization; develop positive attitude towards job, company and management, and retain skilled and talented workers.

Historically, unionism and workers welfare in Enugu State can hardly be discussed without tracing its origin in Nigeria. As early as 1861 when the Lagos colony was formally declared a British colony and the consequent replacement of the trade in slave with the “legitimate Trade” an urban labour force was created. The new exports of palm produce and imports of manufactured goods and the creation of large-scale public works in the Lagos colony necessitated a corresponding work force. The increase in the labour force in Lagos in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century brought with it several disputes between the workers and the colonial government which was the largest employer of labour during this period. One of the fall outs of such labour disputes was the Lagos strike of 1897 (Hopikins, 1966; Nwoko, 2009).

Skilled European workers, who arrived during the later decades of the nineteenth century to work in the new railways, mines and factories, or government servants, seemed to have brought the idea of trade unions into Africa. Consequently, in 1912 the Civil Service Union was formed. After this emerged the Nigerian Mechanic Union, etc. According to Collins (2013), as at 1919,

labour unionism in Nigeria was very young and still an infant such that people or workers did not attach any significant importance to it with respect to their work or jobs.

However, on assumption of legal existence through the enactment of Trade Union Organization Act 1938 which permits workers to form a union that will influence as well as protect their rights and interest at any given level, workers eyes “became opened” as well as that of the employers who saw the workers as parties in progress rather than mere labourers that can be hired and fired at any given point in time without any fear or contradiction. The legal status so assumed by labour unions from such an enactment, conferred onto it, the right to have collective bargaining with their employers with respect to any issue that has to do with the workers interest and the work in general” (Tayo, 1980; Collins, 2009).

The above background led to the formation of other unions such as the Nigeria labour congress (NLC), the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), the Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE), the Nigeria Bar Association (NBA), the Senior Staff Association of Nigeria universities (SSANU), to mention just few. The activities of the trade unions, under the umbrella of the Nigeria labour congress (NLC) for several years contributed to the reversal of government harsh policies and actions. NLC plays social, economic and political roles not only to the working class but to all Nigerians both the employed and unemployed (Okoroafor, 2013; Okechukwu, 2016). Like its counterparts in different parts of the world, the Nigeria labour unions movement had a glorious past, a past characterized by robust struggles and principled opposition to state policies that are inimical to the interests of the working class. It is also a past that was characterized by conscious efforts at mobilizing the rank and file members as a bulwark against state repression which also witnessed the building of alliances between trade union movement and various organizations within larger labour movement.

Contrary to what is used to be, Alaribe (2013) in Ugo and Sebastine (2020) observed that since the transition to democracy in Nigeria in 1999, the emerging union leaders went to sleep and decided to align themselves with the corrupt ruling elites by playing games on the intelligence of most Nigeria working class through their unconventional ways of deceiving their rank-and-file memberships. They are only interested in their selfish interests without considering the interest of the workers they represent.

In Enugu State, the birth of unionism can be traced in concomitant with the creation of the state in 1991. Some of such unions that exist in the state such as ASUU, NULGE, SSANU, NBA, NMA, etc. drew their origin from their mother national bodies from where state branches and chapters were spread across the thirty six (36) states of the federation. Before 2015, welfare of workers such as job security, promotion as when due, timely pension and gratuities, regular training among others were relatively taken care of despite the fact that the demands of the workers were never met without serious struggles with the employers. However, since 2015 till date, there seems to be blatant disregard of labour laws and condition of service of workers by the state government which is the highest employer of labour in the state. Workers welfare in Enugu State is an issue that requires critical evaluation and thought in view of frequent and unending battles between the state government and labour unions. Rather than better condition of service, welfare packages and effective bargaining to improve the socio-economic status of workers across government establishments in the state, each time the unions plan or embarked on industrial action they seem to be visited with sack threats, maltreatment, harassment, intimidation, , arrests of union leaders, beating of union executives, maiming some active members, unlawful stoppage of salary, kidnapping of vocal union leaders, salary cuts and denial

of workers minimum wage that is due to workers etc. Workers in the state especially in the Enugu State University still receive 80% of their salary without a justification for that.

In view of the above, the effectiveness of the labour unions towards securing welfare of their members in Enugu State calls for an inquiry of this nature in view of the precarious socio-economic conditions under which workers carry out their duties in the state. It is based on the above backdrop that the study became imperative.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There seems to exist a significant relationship between effective unionism and workers welfare. Among other things, the essence of establishing workers union is to secure better terms and conditions of employment from employers or state; make and promote demands by agitations, strikes or otherwise in order to ensure that the agreed terms of employment are not eroded; check the excesses of employers and provide workers with a measure of collective strength, ensure job security by making sure that workers are not arbitrary removed from office against the established rules, ensure that promotion comes as and when due, timely provision of pension benefits, etc.

However, in Enugu State and other institutions in Enugu State, unionisms seem to be visited with threats, intimidations and arrest of union leaders. Across the labour unions in Enugu State, such as the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Senior Staff Association of Nigeria Universities, (SSANU), Enugu State Chapter, NULGE etc, maltreatment of union leaders and excos seem to undermine effective unionism. Hence, workers welfare is hardly given the desired attention from 2015 till date. Promotion of workers in Enugu State hardly comes as when due. Promotion is viewed as a privilege and not a right of a worker by the government and management of government establishments despite the fact the issue of promotion is clearly stated in the condition of service. Staff members who are lucky to be promoted after long years of waiting are told that it does not have financial effect but notional effect. It is injustice and in human treatment to deny anybody his or her entitlements. This manifests most in the university in the Enugu State University, and contrary to the part II (2&3) of the Enugu State University Regulations Governing the Conditions of Service for Senior Staff which state thus:

Staff appraisal shall have positive effect in incentives such as commendations... Promotion or advancement shall be based on merit such as qualifications, efficiency, experience and conduct and shall be awarded in recognition thereof. Any employee recommended for promotion to higher post must possess the qualifications and experience required for that post as shown in the career ladder or as may from time to time be determined by the council.

Despite these provisions, those who are qualified and due for promotion seem to be denied of their right of promotion. And this seems to become as unions who are supposed press home the demands of the workers seem to be handicapped. Pensions and gratuities which have are part of welfare packages of the employees are seemingly treated with levity despite the fact that they are contained in the condition of service for workers across the state. Pensioners are owed arrears of pension benefits.

This appears to de-motivate those who are still in active service of the state University. Section 12.1 (1) of the Regulations Governing the conditions of service for senior staff in Enugu State states that:

Every member of staff who is appointed to an established post and holding appointment on tenure confirmed to retiring age shall be entitled, on retirement, to all financial benefit in accordance with the federal government and for state government pension scheme for public servants.

This is hardly the case in the university and other government establishments across the state. Workers and retirees suffer and die without their entitlements. Retirement benefits such as pensions and gratuities are erroneously viewed as privileged and not workers rights. By doing so, welfare of workers remains in shamble and the aftermath is unending hunger and ailments such as strokes, diabetes and blindness due to harsh economic conditions in which workers usually retire with in Enugu State.

It is also worrisome that staff training in the state is yet to be accorded the needed attention. Where training is provided, it is hardly based on training needs. Coupled with the foregoing, is that job security across government establishments in Enugu State is not guaranteed. Workers are threatened often with sack when they demand for their entitlements. Those in the university are the worst hit who receives amputated salaries.

The labour unions in the state seem to be handicapped in the face of intimidation and suppression tendencies of the state government towards the welfare of workers in the state.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The broad objective of the study is to determine the effect of labour unionism on provision of workers welfare in Enugu State. The specific objectives are to:

- i. Ascertain the extent to which labour unionism has guaranteed job security for workers in Enugu State.
- ii. Determine the extent to which workers unions have guaranteed timely promotion of workers in Enugu State.
- iii. Investigate the contributions of workers unions on regular provision of training programmes for workers in Enugu State.
- iv. Ascertain the extent to which labour unionism has assured timely payment of pension to retirees in Enugu State.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The researcher adopted pluralism theory founded by Flanders and Fox in 1970, as the theoretical framework analysis. The theory assumes that different interests and interest groups exist in the work place. For instance, the employers and their association, interest is higher productivity and loyalty etc. Employees and their unions' expect higher pay and job security, whereas the government and its various agencies look for more taxes and industrial peace for economic growth and development. And, the above interests are always opposed to each other thereby creating perpetual conflict of interest in this tripartite relationship in the industrial relation system. Such differences are responsible for the divergent orientations in economic, political, ideological, religious, racial, ethnic, gender and values among the members of work community, each of these groups tries to seek domination by mounting pressure on appropriate authorities that are instrumental to the realization of these goals and where and when necessary



resort to compromise. The primary objective of this theory is to try and resolve the conflicts arising within and between the different interest sub-groups on continuous basis. In the pluralistic point of view, organisations are seen as coalitions of competing interests where the role of management is to mediate amongst the different interest groups again; trade unions are legitimate representatives of employee interests, and most importantly stability in industrial relations as the product of concessions and compromises between management and unions. Legitimacy of the management's authority is not automatically accepted, rather conflicts between the management and workers is understood as inevitable and workers join unions to protect their interests and to influence decision making by the management. Therefore, unions balance the power between the management and employees. This theory is of the view that strong union is not only desirable but necessary, and it further advocates collective bargaining in resolving industrial conflict. This theory has been able to find out why there is crisis in trade unionism which makes it difficult for effective unionism to determine the welfare of workers in Enugu State.

The relevance of the theory to the study is based on the fact conflict is bound to occur in the work place since different groups exist in the work place and pursue divergent interests. The ability of the labour unions, management, government and other relevant stakeholders to harmonize such interests towards the accomplishment of common goal is the beauty of effective collective bargaining. Pluralism sees modern organizations as entities that are plural in nature with people from diverse works of life and distinct interests that must be managed efficiently to realize the organizational goals. It therefore, takes effective unionism to make sure that those interests relating to the welfare of workers are secured. Government and management of government establishments in Enugu State ought to union struggles as efforts that targeted not only on the welfare of workers, but as a way towards motivating the work force to enhance their performance and the overall productivity of the organization.

## **Conceptual Review**

### **The Concept of Labour Unionism**

Labour unionism has been seen over the years as one of the most common and popular feature of every organizations workforce, which seeks to project the rights and interest of labour (employees) from arbitrary economic exploitation and the abuse of dignity of labour by the management (employers) ( Otobo, 1986; Collins, 2013). It is therefore seen as a fundamental tool and instrument used by workers in organizations to seek understanding as well as to influence management decisions that could be detrimental or contrary to the terms and the contract of agreement. Collins (2013) in Obiekwe and Obibhunun (2019) sees labour union as an association of workers, which consists of representatives that mediate between the workers and their employer in order to avoid any unfair treatment that could be meted on them by the employers and conversely ensure commitment to work by its members in a way that will result in high level of productivity and organization efficiency in general. It also refers to organized groupings of workers that relate with employers on various issues concerned with the condition of employment of their members (Adefolaju, 2013).

The Nigerian trade union Act of 1973 cited in Obiekwe and Obibhunun (2019) defines it as;

Any combination of workers or employee whether temporary or permanent, the purpose of which is to regulate the terms and

conditions of employment of workers whether the combination by any reason of its purpose being in restraint of trade and whether its purpose do or do not exist include the provision of benefits to members”.

Oviegbara (2001) observed that the two significant criteria of this definition for determining whether an association is a trade union are: the combination must be workers or employers and, that it must have proper purpose, which is that of regulating the terms and conditions of employment of workers. Labour union is also seen as organization whose membership consists of wage earners and union leaders, who are united to promote and pursue their common interest and welfare, and regulate terms and conditions of their employment through collective bargaining and consultations with employers. Labour union is an organization of workers formed to protect the rights and interests of its members. It could also be defined as an organization of workers formed for the purpose of advancing its members interests in respect to wages, benefits and working conditions (Omeje and Ogbu, 2019).

### **Objectives of Labour Unionism**

The principal objective of labour union according to Obiekwe and Obibhunun (2019) is the regulation of the terms and conditions of employment of workers and to present a collective and strong and united front in collective bargaining activity. In other words, trade union. Objectives are to fight for the interest of all her members in matters relating to terms and conditions of employment in the industrial settings. In addition, other objectives of trade unions are to regulate relations between its members (workers) and the employers, raise new demands of better condition of work on behalf of its members, and to help in industrial grievance and between members and their respective organizations. In fighting for the interest of its members, a trade union seek to optimize the working conditions at the workplace and guarantees a job security, protection of members against inhumane, unjust and unfair treatment from management.

The overall objectives of labour unionism was apply captured by Yesufu (1984) in Ugo and Sebastine (2020) who observed that the essence of labour unions is to;

- i. Equalize the strength between workers and employers in matters of collective bargaining.
- ii. Secure better terms and conditions of employment from employers or the state.
- iii. Make demand and promote the demands by agitation, strikes or otherwise in order to ensure that the agreed terms of employment are not eroded.
- iv. Attempt to create the permanent or continuous existence of the trade unions.
- v. Protect workers from humiliating jobs/unfair treatment by employers.
- vi. Provide collective identity to workers (solidarity) and (comradeship).
- vii. Act as influencing agent to government policies affecting workers adversely.
- viii. Act as a vehicle for revolutionary social and economic transformation of the society.
- ix. Join hand with other groups in the society to advance the economic development in the larger society.
- x. Check the excesses of employers and provide workers with a measure of collective strength.

### **Conceptualizing Employee Welfare**

Employee welfare is a critical component of human resource management tool which is used to motivate workers towards high level productivity in the organization. The International Labour Organisation (ILO), (2010) observed that employee welfare should be understood as such service, facilities and amenities which may be established in or in the vicinity of undertakings to enable the persons employed in them to perform their work in health and peaceful surroundings and to avail of facilities which improve their health and bring high morale. Welfare includes anything that is done for the comfort and improvement of employees and is provided over and above wages. Bharathi and Padmaja (2018) note that employee welfare refers to taking care of well-being of workers by employers, trade unions and governmental and non-governmental agencies. Recognizing the unique place of the worker in the society and doing good for him/her, retaining and motivating employees, minimizing social evils, and building up the local reputation of the company are the arguments in favour of employee welfare. Welfare is a desirable state of existence involving physical, mental, moral and emotional well-being.

Welfare is a positive concept. In order to establish minimum acceptable conditions of existence, biologically and socially welfare is imperative. The positive nature calls for the setting up of the minimum desirable necessary for certain components of welfare such as health, food, clothing, housing, medical assistance, insurance, education, recreation and so on. Welfare helps to keep the moral and motivation of the employees for longer duration. The welfare measures need not to be in monetary terms only but in any form. Employee welfare includes monitoring of working conditions, creation of industrial harmony through infrastructure for health, industrial relations and insurance against disease, accident and unemployment for the workers and their families. Labour or employee welfare entails all those activities of employees which are directed towards providing the employees with certain facilities and services in addition to wages and salaries (Deepti, 2018).

### **Objectives of Employee Welfare**

Scholars such as Ganesh (2020), Bharathi and Padmaja (2018), and Dushar (2019) aptly stated that the essence of employee welfare is to:

- i. Provide better life and health to workers
- ii. Make workers happy and satisfied.
- iii. Relieve workers from industrial fatigue and to improve intellectual, culture and material condition of living of the workers.
- iv. Influence the sentiment of the workers and helps to maintain industrial peace. When the employee feels that the employer and the government are interested in his/her day-to-day life he/she feels happy about the working conditions.
- v. Improve the mental and moral health of the worker by minimizing the incidents of social evil of industrialization. Working in a bad environment pushes a worker into vices like drinking, gambling and prostitution. Healthy surroundings created force against such vices.
- vi. Helps to improve good will and reputation of the organization.
- vii. Control labour – turnover and absenteeism.



As welfare work improves conditions of work and life of the employees, the worker becomes happy and contented with his/her work. This may likely reduce his/her desire to take leave unnecessarily and tend to reduce absenteeism in the organization.

### **Components of Employee Welfare**

Employee welfare whether statutory, voluntary or mutual has some identifiable components. These include job security, timely promotion of workers, regular provision of training programmes to keep the workers in tune with the dynamic working environment, pension etc. According to Deepti (2018), these benefits include pension plans, leave, insurance, health care plans, food services, education, expenses and social activities, etc. To Dushar (2019), employee welfare activities include medical activities, canteen facilities, housing facilities, transport facilities, sports and recreation facilities, advances and easy loan facilities, death/funeral facilities, thrift facilities, education facilities, legal and other facilities.

Some of these welfare packages are briefly discussed here as key variables of the objectives of the study.

#### **i. Job Security**

Job security constitutes one of the ways through which employers make sure that employees commitment to the goals and objectives of the organization are rewarded. The term is understood as the state of knowing that ones's job is secure and that one is unlikely to be dismissed or made redundant (Shouwick, Mohammed & Zainab, 20018). Job security is seen as an employee's assurance or confidence that they will keep their current job. Abolade (2018) observed that job security for an employee is that he/her job is not threatened and that the individual will be on the job as long as the individual wants with no reasons whether objective or subjective that he/she might lose the job. The goal of job security is to increase the level of reassurance of the employee on his/her future career and ending all forms of worry for the future. Job security serves as motivation to employees in the organization.

#### **ii. Pension**

Pension is simply defined as an arrangement to provide people with an income from employment (Folorunsho, 2015). Pension schemes are social security maintenance plan for workers after their disengagement as employees through retirement (Ilesanmi, 2006). Ngwu (2013) in Eze & Anikeze (2018) defined pension as fixed amount other than wages paid at regular intervals usually in monthly installments to a pensioner in consideration of past services, age, merit, injury or loss sustained. It is a social security arrangement whereby workers draw retirement benefits for services rendered in the past. A pension scheme may be contributory or non-contributory. A contributory pension scheme is obtainable in a system where the employer and the employee made contributions into pension savings account to be accessed by the employee on retirement. Non-contributory pension scheme on the other hand, operates where the employer bears the burden of payment of pension alone without the contribution from the employees.

Luka (2006) in Okereke (2021:17) summarized the need for pension as follows:

- a. Genuine concern for the welfare of retired employees of a company or organization.
- b. To show a sense of moral obligation towards the dependants of a man who dies while in the service.

- c. To keep open the channels of promotion in a company or organization by making advance provision for the orderly and dignified retirement of older individuals.
- d. To cut down wasteful labour turnover, enhance condition of employment with the company so that recruits of higher caliber may be attracted.
- e. To protect social disorder in the economy by providing for the retiree, so that they can be useful to the economy and society after their retirement.

The above informed the earlier remark by Adebayo (2006), who argued that the greater level of importance given to pension and gratuity by employers is because of the belief that if employees future needs are guaranteed and their fears ameliorated and properly taken care of, they will be motivated to contribute positively to organizations output.

### **iii. Employee Training**

Cole (2002) in Nushrat (2018) defined training as the learning activity directed towards acquiring specific knowledge and skills for occupation or task. It is a procedure or strategy through which the abilities, talents and knowledge of workers are upgraded and expanded in line with the current trends in order to be equipped to contribute meaningfully to goals and specific objectives of the organization. To Gadi and lauko (2019), training refers to bridging the gap between the current performance and the standard desired performance. Staff training constitutes the welfare of workers. An employer who is conscious of the level of performance of his or her staff will likely provide regular training in order to ensure that the employees perform at the expected level. Training serves as motivational tool towards high level performance for employees and it also benefits the organization productively. This is why Nwachukwu (1988) in Onah (2015) contends that indicators that workers in any organization require training are the following factors. (i) lack of interest in one's job; (ii) negative attitude towards work (iii) low productivity; (iv) tardiness (v) excessive absenteeism rate (vi) excessive complain; (vii) high rejects or low quality output (viii) high incidence of accident and insubordination. These negative vices that hamper employee performance are addressed through programmes.

### **iv. Promotion**

Promotion is a critical component of employee's welfare packages. Job promotion is an increase in workforce or employees in better jobs, compared to previously greater responsibilities, achievements, facilities, higher status, higher proficiency demands, and additional wages or salaries and other benefits (Neck, Houghton & Murray, 2018).

Knick and Fugate (2017) submit that job promotion occurs when an employee moves from one job to another, which is higher in payment, responsibility and level. Promotion provides opportunities for personal growth, more responsibility, and increased social status. Hasibuan (2018) argues that promotion is a move that enlarges the authority and responsibility of employees to higher positions in an organization so that obligations rights, status are regularly accorded employees in due time.

Job promotion plays an important role for every employee, even a dream that is always waiting for. If there is an opportunity for employees to be promoted based on the principles of fairness and objectivity, employees will be motivated to work harder, be more enthusiastic, disciplined, towards optimal accomplishment of organizational goals and objectives (Muhammed, Herlina and Nur, 2019). Eka, Putra, Susila, and Yulianthini (2016) added that the existence of promotional targets, make employees feel valued, cared for, needed and recognized by their organization. They maintain that organization can help

employees develop the ability or potential and achieve desired careers by organizing employee training programmes that can improve employee performance so that the organization can provide a “reward” in the form of promotion.

In the course of employee services to the organization, the above discussed welfare packages are supposed to be provided to boost the morale of the workers. They are not only beneficial to the individual employees alone, but welfare packages have positive impact to the performance and overall productivity of the organization. This belief is projected globally by scholars and organizational managers who wish to remain competitively relevant in the dynamic business environment.

### **Trade Unionism and Workers Welfare: The Nigerian Experience**

Contextually, it is less cumbersome to establish the nexus between unionism and welfare of workers. It clearly suffices to say that one of the objectives of trade unionism is to make sure that employers take adequate care of welfare of their staff members. The benefits accruing from labour unionism are mutual, for it does not only lead to enhancement of socio-economic condition of workers, but also significantly contributes to the overall productivity of the organization.

The idea behind the formation of a Labour union in Nigeria first came up in the early nineteenth century, and some of the very early unions that came into existence as at that time were the Civil Service Union which was formed in 1912. After this came the Nigerian Mechanic Union, the Railway Local-Drivers Union etc. The aims and objectives of these unions just like that of any other trade union in the world was nothing other than to obtain better condition of service and employment for their members (Ubeku, 1983, Collins, 2013). As of 1919, labour unionism in Nigeria was very young and still at infant stage such that people or workers did not attach much significant importance to it with respect to their work or jobs. However, with the establishment of Trade Union Organisation Act 1938 which permits workers to form a union that will influence as well as protect their rights and interest at any given level, workers eyes “become opened” as well as that of the employers who saw the workers as partners in progress rather than mere labourers that can be hired and fired at any point in time without any fear or contradiction. The legal status so assumed by labour unions from such an enactment, conferred onto it, the “right to have collective bargaining with their employers with respect to any issue that has to do with the workers interest and work in general (Tayo, 1980, Collins, 2013).

In Nigeria today, the strategic umbrella bodies of the trade unions are the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC). Other labour unions such as the Academic Staff union of Universities (ASUU), the Senior Staff Association of Nigeria Universities (SSANU), the Nigeria Bar Association (NBA), National Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE), among others are part of the NLC and TUC.

Okoroafor, (2013), Okechukwu, (2016), and Ugo and Sebastine (2020) submit that in Nigeria, trade unions fought against colonial rule and exploitation of the Nigerian State during the colonial era. These activities of the trade unions, under the umbrella of the NLC, have been responsible for the several reversals 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.

Following the creation of Enugu State in 1996 and subsequently the establishment of various government institutions, the need to form labour unions that will project the aspirations and

welfare of workers became imperative. It is right to state very clearly here that most of these unions predate the creation of the state. Hence, in Enugu State, we have virtually the branches of all the National Unions.

Be that it may, one of the major ways through which workers welfare is determined in the contemporary era is through collective bargaining. Okoli (1999) in Onah (2015) sees collective bargaining as a vehicle by which management (employers) and the representatives (unions) of the workers attempt to reach a collective agreement or solving and avoiding problems related to compensation, retirement, fringe benefits, disciplinary layoffs, promotions work scheduling, and other conditions of employment. Thus, collective bargaining involves joint determination by workers and employers to solve problems and issues pertaining to human resource management. Collective bargaining or joint negotiation is essentially an autonomous system of making job rules between employers and trade unions. It is a process of a party in industrial relations making proposals or demands, discussing, criticizing, explaining, and exploring the meaning and effects of the proposals, or seeking to secure their acceptance.

Onah (2015) posits that there are certain conditions for collective bargaining. According to him, collective bargaining is an important interface between management and labour unions, and at whatever level the machinery of collective bargaining is to take place, there are basic conditions that must be fulfilled before the machinery can develop, and attain maturity and success. Firstly, is the creation of a sufficient labour force. This is followed by the existence of strong stable trade unions, independent of external influence and democratic in nature. Another condition is freedom of association and favorable political climate. In the same vein, collective bargaining cannot develop or thrive for long in a society where government in particular and the public in general are not convinced about the utility of the process as the best method of determining forms and conditions of employment. More so, the prevalence and pre-eminence of the spirit of “give and take” is a necessary prelude to collective bargaining in public organizations.

Apart from collective agreement principles, there are available laws and provisions in the various condition of service in Nigeria in general and Enugu State in particular, that ought to enhance provision of workers welfare by the government and management of government establishment in the state. For instance, section 173 (1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended, provides that the right of a person in the public service of the federation to receive pension or gratuity shall be guaranteed by law. The public service rules condition of service documents made provision for staff welfare, training, job security, promotion among others.

However, workers welfare has not been protected by their unions in Enugu State due to certain challenges. It is imperative to first draw inference from the Nigeria case before Enugu State because the activities of the national bodies influence the branches or chapters across the federation. Alaribe (2013) in Ugo and Sebastine (2020) regretted that since the transition to democracy in Nigeria in 1999, the emerging union leaders went to sleep and decided to align themselves with the corrupt ruling elites by playing games on the intelligence of most Nigeria working class through their ‘maradonic’ ways deceiving their rank and file membership. According to him, they are only interested in their selfish interests without considering the interest of the workers they represent. In their assessment of trade unionism in Nigeria, Ifeanyi and Mondli (2020) observed that the contemporary leadership of the trade union movement in Nigeria is associated with the process of emporgeoisement – the quest for material ascendancy.

This tendency makes the leadership socially disconnected from the rank and file-a lifestyle that provokes the symbolism of Nigerian politics. Closely related to the foregoing, is the issue of political instability interference by the two major political parties in Nigeria – The All Progressive Congress (APC) the ruling party and the people Democratic Party (PDP) the major opposition party.

Influential members of the two parties were found at the 2015 NLC Delegates Conference allegedly bankrolling some events and processes and using the opportunity to solicit support for their respective political parties in 2015 general elections. This comprised the integrity of the conference and the NLC elections that followed. Meanwhile, the welfare of the Nigerian workers including Enugu State had dipped to a very low ebb following the poor monthly minimum wage of N18,000, implicating poverty (Ifeanyi and Mondli, 2020).

In Enugu State, industrial relations since 2015 had become a difficult issue to deal with owing to the fact that government in power dominated all the labour unions, ranging from NUT, NULGE, NMA, JUSUN, ASUU, NASU, SSANU, NAAT and other unions in the state, this domineering attitude of the state government had really undermined the activities of labour unions in Enugu State to the extent that none of the above mentioned unions are able to engage government in collective bargaining to determine the welfare of their members thereby making it extremely difficult for union leaders or workers of Enugu State to predict what their future could look like, because there is no indication on the side of government that they are willing to better the lots of the workers in Enugu State. This assertion manifests in the attitudes of Enugu State Government towards annual promotions and advancement of workers since 2015 till date. Therefore, this scenario suggests that the economic conditions of workers in Enugu State may be worst if the labour leaders and their members fail to fight for their rights and privileges.

### **Empirical Review**

Nwakoby and Chukwurah (2020) examined the “impact of Employee Welfare Sustainability towards improving Efficiency in the Selected Tertiary Institutions in the South East, Nigeria”. Among other things, the researchers determined the nature of relationship between employee welfare and labour efficiency in the institutions studied. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Five Federal Institutions were selected across the five states (Federal University of agriculture Umudike, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Alex Ekwueme University, Ndufu Alike, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Federal University of Technology, Owerri) in the South East zone. The population of the full-time staff in the selected universities was 7,319, hence a sample size technique was applied, with questionnaires distributed to a sample of 541 employees, and 498 complete responses were retrieved. Data analysis was done using regression statistical tool. It was revealed that employees’ welfare scheme is very imperative and sine qua non to the livelihood of any organization for onward sustenance, prompt and effective productivity. The researchers among other things recommended that the workers should be fully educated and made to be aware of information related to welfare scheme. They should advance further on open door policy to all staff both academics and non-academics.

Ifeanyi and Mondli (2020) did a study titled “An overview of the conditions of workers and the unions in South Africa and Nigeria”. The study comparatively analyzed the effect of workers unions on the welfare of workers in the two countries studied. Thematic approach was utilized as the basic methodology for the study. This was considered suitable because of the nature of comparative overviews undertaken. By its nature, data on the thematic issues such as



the emergence of the labour movement, changes in social composition of trade unions, the nature and effects of fragmentation of unions and the forms of precarious work were comparatively analyzed for South Africa and Nigeria. It was discovered that Neo liberal attacks on workers and working conditions have led to changes in the social compositions of workers and the rise of precarious forms of work in both countries. Beyond that, union federations are also faced with fragmentation and division, weakening their position to challenge attacks on workers. The paper therefore recommended improved welfare packages in both countries in order to enhance social conditions of workers.

Ugo and Sebastine (2020) in their work titled “A critical study of the key challenges of trade unionism in Nigeria’s fourth republic” investigated the major challenges of trade unionism in the Nigeria’s Fourth Republic with a view to proffering solutions to such problems. A qualitative research method was adopted and was content analyzed in relation to the scope of the paper. Marxist theory of class conflict was adopted as the theoretical framework of the study. The paper observed that lack of committed leadership, lack of internal democracy; government intervention, tribalism and nepotism, internal factionalism, apathetic attitude, poor economic climate and non-affiliation with foreign union are the major challenges that trade unions in Nigeria currently face. The paper recommends among others that unions should imbibe the tenets of democracy in their internal administration.

In a related study, Omeje and Ogbu (2019) researched on “Impact of labour union strikes on Public Institutions in Nigeria: A study of Academic Staff Union of Universities – Enugu State University, Abakaliki 2016/2017 strike. The study sought among others to determine how ASUU-EBSU Strike brought about disruption of institutions academic and programme and its effects on normal skill acquisition among students of Enugu State University. Descriptive Survey design was adopted with a population of 2,350 being the staff strength of the institution. A sample of 342 determined using Taro Yamani formula. Chi-square statistical testing tool was used to analyze the data generated through structured questionnaire for the study. It was found that the labour Unions’ strike brought about disruption of the institutions academic calendar and programme, altered normal skill acquisition process among the students of Enugu State University. Based on the findings, the paper recommended that employers of labour should devise appropriate motivational strategies to motivate their employees for greater productivity. All the stakeholders and parties to collective bargaining should comply with the resolution of the bargaining to avert strikes.

Similarly, Stephen and Emeka (2014) studied “Trade Unionism and the Enhancement of Workers’ Welfare in Nigeria Maritime Sector: An Empirical Analysis”. The study investigated the relationship between Trade Union’s negotiations, enhancement of workers’ welfare, influence of trade unions on education of members and trade unions’ leadership training on enhancement of workers’ welfare. The paper adopted survey method anchored basically on questionnaire and interviews as means of data collection. One-way analysis of variance and Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics were used to analyze the data. The findings showed that the level of deprivation of workers from benefiting from their welfare package either by management or sometimes by ill-mannered union leaders was responsible for majority of the conflicts and strikes in work settings in our contemporary economy. It was therefore recommended that trade unionism should be encouraged in all work settings and its leaders equipped with knowledge of industrial relations, union leaders should be individuals who seek after the welfare of its members and not their personal benefits.

In a similar vein, Toyin (2013) researched on “Trade Unions in Nigeria and the challenges of internal democracy”. The major objective of the study was to assess possible hindrances to the commitment to internal democracy by trade unions. Six hundred and forty members of five trade unions were selected through a probability, multi-stage random sampling technique. Structured questionnaire was used to generate data for the study. Data generated for the study were analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The study revealed that trade unions in Nigeria is yet to imbibe the tenets of democracy in their internal administrations as for example, female participation in their activities is only about 23 percent. The study therefore recommended that given the challenges facing trade unions generally, especially in this era of globalization and economic restrictions, it is imperative for trade unions to harness the resources of all its members in order to sustain its growth and development.

Furthermore, Collins (2013) in his study titled “Labour unionism and its Effects on Globalization Productivity: A case of Jos International breweries (JIB) PLC, Nigeria” attempted to find out whether or not labour unionism in organizations are partners in progress and complements managements’ effort towards enhancing organizational productivity and efficiency. Descriptive survey design was adopted while 50 staff members of the company were selected for the study.

Structured questionnaire was used as the main instrument for data collection while chi-square was adopted to analyze the data generated for the study. The study discovered that labour unionism in the organization is not destructive but a boost to the worker with intentions of motivating him to putting his best towards organizational productivity, by protecting his rights and interest. The study therefore recommended that management should recognize and acknowledge labour union activities and contributions to the organization. This will bring about harmonious working relationship so as to enhance greater productivity and mutual resolution of conflicts. Moreover, management should identify itself with the employee’s demands especially on improved conditions of service so as to foster understanding between management and union members.

### **Strategies for Effective Trade Unionism in Enugu State Public Service**

**Collaboration between Union Leaders and Employees:** Trade union should create a level playground for all members to take part in the decision making machinery of the unions. They must present a strong united front since multiple unions dilutes the power of unions and reduces their effectiveness. In this regard, trade unions should come together in order to present a strong united voice in matters affecting their members and the general society. In addition, freedom should be given to members to freely participate in all union programmes and in all important decision. It is when the society sees and realizes that there are true democratic processes in trade union activities that the unions will be taken seriously. In all, for a union to be successful, it must attend primary to their members needs and not be overly concerned about taking a particular political approach and side.

**Strong Activism among Union Leaders:** Due to the challenge of poor and non-proactive leadership, union members should ensure that only qualified, tested and trusted leaders who are

truly workers should be voted into position of office both at the local, state and national level. It is only leaders with integrity that will have the courage to say no to various financial inducements the government and captains of industry will offer them. In addition union leaders should be properly trained and educated to know the basic labour laws in order to plan their actions within the confide of the laws to avoid pursuing shadows while leaving the substance especially during collective bargaining and conflict resolving meetings. Labour unions should educate workers of their rights and duties and developing in them a sense of responsibility, and also provide for the training and adequate education for their members in order to give room for advancement of their members.

**Cooperation among Workers:** On their part, employers (business owners and managers) should support the involvement of a union representative and workers in some of the decisions regarding work conditions because some of the workers can be better informed about ways of raising productivity in their departments, and can help to accelerate agreed-upon decision. This is because, when issues arise at the workplace between managers and the employee, union representatives can be used to secure a “win-win” in which both sides feel as if they each attained something from the deal.

### **Need for Strategic Trade Unionism in Enugu State Public Service**

There is no need to over-emphasis the importance of effective unionism in industrial relations in Nigeria, without which, the efforts of workers could be in vain, and their welfare remain in a state of despondence particularly in Enugu State where labour relations appear to be seen as an aberration by the state government. For a union to be effective, it has to promote peace and unity among members. Effective unionism projects and promotes members interest at all times. It entails unionism that adheres to internal democracy, where members are recognized as partners in progress and where equity, fairness and justice prevail. Effective unionism connotes leadership devoid of rancor, bribery and corruption, and where union executives are committed to the welfare of the workers and their primary concern.

Drawing from the above, the major issue is on how to address excessive government interference in the activities of the labour unions in the state which has undermined efforts at securing better welfare packages for the workers. The undue interference manifests in the election of excos members whereby external influences seem to influence the outcome of the elections. It is through this means that the government infiltrates the activities of the union and therefore conditions the outcome of their policies and programmes. This has hindered the growth of many unions in the state. For instance, the chapter of NULGE is unable to conduct its elections over the years partly as a result of unhealthy rivalry among Exco members occasioned by external influence.

Another issue is nepotic tendencies in the election of those who represent the unions. Internal democracy ought to be maintained. Some of the unions in the state seem unable to choose their leaders without regard to ethnic inclination. This seems to make struggles weak, parochial and primordial sentiments.

The Enugu State government since 2015 has been tormenting and dehumanizing Enugu workers. This maltreatment of workers started from health workers, eventually, their salaries were slashed and the workers went to court to seek redress, but that litigation yielded no fruit. Since then other workers in Enugu State are affected including Enugu State University of

Science and Technology that has recently suffered all kinds of humiliation, such as proscription of the four unions, slashed salaries based on eighty percent (80%) pay, delay of monthly subvention and unbridled reductions, in the subvention given, stoppage in check off dues, so as to undermine the strength of the said unions. Therefore, union leaders in Enugu State are expected to brace up to the challenges facing labour matters so as to ameliorate the economic, social and moral condition of workers in Enugu State to avert making it a bad culture.

### **Discussion of Findings**

From 2015 till date workers welfare in Enugu State has not been accorded the desired attend and this has significantly increased the suffering of the people. Among others, workers in Enugu State suffer from hunger, poverty and some have died of preventable ailments as a result poor working conditions. Job security is not guaranteed and effective unionism is lacking and labour unions and their members are often visited with suspension, threat of job loss, intimidation and all other human ill treatment each time they attempt to press home their demands for welfare. This ugly condition de-motivates workers and leads to poor performance of assigned responsibilities. This also has resulted to persistent labour turn over in the state. There is persistent brain-drain in Enugu State University as most experienced lecturers have opted to look for a better condition of service elsewhere. This is also true for other sectors in the state.

This attitude of government and management and management of government establishments demoralizes workers. In a similar vein, Shaheem, Sami, Fias, Abdul, Joseph and Gamal (2017) found that employee performance and employee engagement meditates the relationship between employee job security and employee performance. The findings of Shouvik and Mohammed (2018) are also in agreement with the present study.

They revealed that job security dimensions contribute significantly on the levels of the employees' performance and satisfaction. They also revealed that permanent employees were more secure about their job status and compared to temporary employees. The foregoing is also related to the submissions of Aided, Abeera, Mehwish and Tania (2020) who found that work conditions contribute positively to efficiency of employees. In his findings, Abolade (2018) established that job insecurity negatively affect organization performance and induce employee turnover. Job insecurity has also been linked to have negative impacts on happiness at work and higher-order construct and all of its dimensions (Zivile, Egle, and Jona, 2021). Despite the gains associated with job security, employees' job security has been hampered by the negative attitude of the state government towards the workers. This ranges from regular threat of sack and termination to salary cuts and other unhealthy practices across the state which has resulted to labour turnover.

It is also observed that the effectiveness of the labour unions has not been felt in area of ensuring timely promotion for workers. Promotion across the state service, especially in the Enugu State University is viewed as a privilege and not a right of a worker. It hardly comes as and when due. Since 2015 till date when the exercise is conducted, it takes years to be released with no financial effect. This may have hindered efficient performance of task. When workers are rendered stagnant over the years even when they have the qualifications to be promoted it hinders them from fulfilling obligations to their families as their expenditure increases without a commensurate promotion and increase in salary. In support of the outcome of the study, Simoyo, Supardi and Udin (2020) found that training and promotion had a positive significant effect on

work motivation, while job promotion has a more dominant direct effect than training, improving employee job performance will be more productive by providing job promotions to employees.

Muhammad, Herlina, and Nur (2019) revealed that basically employees who have the desire to experience promotions will tend to have good performance, if achieved or not performance targets are used as a basis for assessment in the promotion of positions in addition to royalty, education level and work experience.

The outcome of the study also shows that training across government establishments in the state is very low. Onah (2015) in support of this foregoing observed that most universities especially in Nigeria do not have staff training and development policies in a written document. Such document would enable a staff member to enjoy his training entitlements in his/her career life. This is unfortunate in view of the importance of staff training. Labour unions in the state have not achieved much in their efforts to persuade employers towards regular provision of training programmes to consistently improve skills relevant to performance. The outcome of the study is also supported by the findings of Kuruppu, Kaviarathne and Karunarathna (2021) who revealed there is a strong positive and significant relationship between training and performance. Nushrat (2018) found that the more employees get training the more efficient their level of performance would be.

Furthermore, the issue of pension and gratuities has not significantly improved in the state through active unionism, especially when it has to do with timely payment of pension benefits. Pensioners are owed areas of pension benefits with its concomitant social economic effect on the retirees. This has brought economic hardship, loss of hope, sickness, death to the retirees and a bleak future for those who are still in active service. Despite the benefits of retirement entitlements to both employers and employees, administration of pension benefits in the state does not have human face. Alluding to the benefits of retirement savings, Dugguh and Iliya (2018) discovered that good retirement plans affect employee performance in cement manufacturing companies in Nigeria. Musali, Haruna and Zainuending (2016) added that there is significant positive relationship between organizational welfare and the quality of performance of border management personnel in Nigeria.

## **Conclusion**

Efforts have been made in this study to determine the effect of effective unionism in securing welfare of the workers in Enugu State. The study became imperative based on the inhuman treatment meted on workers in Enugu State especially from 2015 till date. One expects that various labour unions in the state should be able to persuade the government and managements of government institutions across the state through collective bargaining towards improving the socio-economic well being of union members. However, this has never been the case consequent upon unfortunate blatant government harsh disposition against the workers which has resulted to many strike actions. In Enugu State, job security is not guaranteed across the institutions of State University. Training and staff promotion are treated with levity while retirees are owed areas of pension benefits. It seems as if union members have little say regarding workers welfare, as those were brave enough to speak in favour of their welfare were visited with sack threats, intimidation, harassment etc. In the state, insensitivity towards workers welfare also manifests in salary cuts, delays in payment of the amputated salary, non-commitment to fulfillment of the agreement entered with the labour unions by the government and its management. This precarious state of affairs therefore calls for effective unionism as a



sure means through which workers in the state can regain their freedom and rights. In this case, union leaders are expected to lead a strong defense against job losses for those with the privileges of membership through effective representation of their members even in the face of turmoil and political crisis without undue compromise.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the outcome of the study, the following recommendations were made to improve the welfare of workers in Enugu State.

1. To improve the welfare of workers in Enugu State there is need to guarantee job security. This can be achieved through effective unionism that is devoid of rancor and disunity but unions activities that pursue the core mandates of their unions without fear of favour.
2. There is need for unions across the state to be proactive in order to ensure timely promotion of workers with all the entitlements attached. In order to achieve this, the union members should give maximum support to their executives.
3. There is need for government to provide regular training in order to improve skills relevant to performance. Labour unions should persuade government and other relevant stakeholders to provide regular training for workers.
4. Pension and gratuity are the rights of workers. There is need for unions to ensure that workers are not denied of their rights. Whenever there is infringement on workers' rights, union leaders should seek redress in the industrial court as this has yield results in the past.

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