



Trade Unions And Organizational Productivity: A Study Of Association Of Senior Civil Servants Of Nigeria (ASCSN),

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ABSTRACT

The study examined existing constraints that impede trade unions commitment to improve organizational productivity. A Survey-based descriptive research design was used. The study adopted Management by Objective (MBO) as its theoretical framework and was carried out on senior employees of Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, Nigeria. A total sample of 338 union members from 8 States' Union Chapters and labour offices were selected, the same number of copies of questionnaire were distributed out of which 321 were returned upon which the data analyses were based. Also, 6 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and 6 In- Depth Interviews (IDI) were conducted to complement the use of the questionnaire, while secondary data were consulted by review of empirical literature. After a detailed analysis, the study found that trade unions are less committed to organizational productivity due to underlying anti union and unfair labour practices such as non enforcement and compliant with labour standards and implementation of collective bargaining agreements (CBA) reached, these adversely affect unions to act as key partners and block the chances for unions to motivate members for peak performance. The study recommended that there was need to strengthen the institutional mechanism for industrial conflict resolution, implementation and enforcement of labour standards to improve social dialogue, workplace relations and joint decisions making in dealing with workplace problems that adversely affect organizational productivity.

Keywords: Trade Union; Organizational Productivity.

INTRODUCTION

The typical work place, whether private or public is made up of groups with varying interests. The employer is represented by Management whose ultimate goal is to ensure efficient and effective service delivery and maximization of profit in some cases. The employee(s), whether represented by union or not, has its focus on job security, welfare, benefits and career progression. In a case where the Government is also joined as a party (tritepatite) to the scheme of events in the workplace the work relationships become more complex. However, despite the competing group interests, the desire of every employer is to achieve and maintain industrial harmony in the workplace so as to create the right atmosphere for enhanced productivity and profit

In view of the above, Several efforts has been made through Labour and public sector reforms including dedicated commissions of inquiries and recommendations from research works with a view to finding lasting solutions to the problems associated with trade unions as it affect the quality and quantity of public service delivery in Nigeria.

According to Hassan (2011) the early trade unions were largely concerned with the agitation for wage increase, and for cost of living allowance (COLA) which the colonial administration was forced to give to the Nigerian workers. As a result, the first five years of independence was marked by widespread social, economic and political progress. Labour played its role in this progress, mobilizing Nigerian workers for higher productivity and negotiating higher pay and decent conditions of service for its members. The

success achieved through strikes made workers to be more conscious and confident of their power. During that era, the government and the law hardly interfered with the process of collective bargaining. Hence, labour productivity, real GDP per capita, government employment growth and workers' wages all rose in tandem, with the Nigeria workers not only creating more wealth but also captured a proportional share of the gains. The public sector then was the desire of Nigerian workers because they had fair wages and benefits, patronage and ever-rising standard of living accompanied by National economic boom. As Fashoyin (2014) explained, the key reason for trade union commitment to the welfare of its members vis-à-vis organizational productivity during this period was founded in the collective national conscience that bonded them being that they wanted to ensure that they contribute to the growth of the economy of their time.

The above notwithstanding, the effective management of human relationship in the workplace to achieve organizational goals still remains an intricate art, hence, organizational managers has continued to search for basic guidelines and best ways to relate with unions with a view to improve organizational productivity.

It is in line with the above concern that the role of trade unions either in the public or private sector has increasingly been recognized as a major force in defining organizational behaviour which affect productivity (Singh,2013).The crux of the argument here is that the relationship between management and union when cordial leads to mutual benefits/creates enabling work environment for employees' satisfaction and job performance as well as high chances of organizational productivity Sen, (2014). However, the role of ASCSN in seeking ways to improve workers conditions of employment and delivering productivity gains in public organizations, especially the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment is not clearly understood, nor recognized, especially in Nigeria.

The Problem

Since independence till date, successive government in Nigeria have carried out several labour and public service reforms to redress the deplorable conditions in the country economy with the cardinal aim of promoting efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector. Unfortunately, the impact of most of the reforms has been to reduce employment which adversely affects workers' terms and conditions of employment, leaving the public servants more demoralized and demotivated. Most times the government does not fully implement the recommendations of the reforms panel, due to lack of strategic vision and political will on the part of the leadership (Olanrewaju, 2011). Consequently, the ASCSN has long-term experiences and historical circumstances that intervene to define the pattern it adopts in collective bargaining and negotiation of conditions of work. Government periodically appoints tribunals and wage commissions to review wages and salaries making it the sole determinant of wages and other employment conditions in the public sector. The rules and scope of engagement of employment conditions are decidedly contrived by other policies and practices of the employer (Fashoyin, 2014).

The research on balance of power between unions and government shows that historical outcomes of consultations concerning collective bargaining negotiations reflects more of unilateral state decisions, rather than mutual agreement. This creates a wide and unequal gap in the negotiating power between union and government (as employer), suggesting a significant problem begging for solution. It is on this note that Strauss (1996) opine that globalization and competitive markets have created situations where trade unions seem to be getting weaker while management is getting stronger almost everywhere. It is however, astonishing, that after years of existence, the ASCSN has not been able to develop sustainable strategies to reverse its inept status. The assumed reason for this is that the officials of the trade unions are just using the union's platform to project their self-interest.

A study on the ASCSN conducted by Ododoru (2010) revealed that the union has become relatively weak, inefficient and as such incapable of a healthy negotiation that is required for productivity in the Ministries. According Obipi (2018) productivity has been hopelessly turned upside down in the public service; while Emuchay (2018) observed that the Nigeria government hires the right people but never prepare them for their role and equally fail to provide work and basic tools in the midst of poor work conditions and worst form of unfair labour practices. These are practices that stand against decent and quality productive work-life as encapsulated in the ILO Conventions No. 87 and 98) and other extant

labour laws. Meanwhile the workers unions appear helpless, showing the level of weakness in the commitment of ASCSN in recent times. Hence, the average Nigerian worker becomes poorer even as his effort to deliver public services increase. Needless to point out that this is likely to undermine the level of productivity of workers who find themselves in such a condition.

Also, Eme, Okechukwu, Emeh, Anyadike and Nkechi (2012) in their appraisal of government agencies responsible for industrial peace and harmony, observed that the Nigerian industrial relation system has always been besieged by a history of conflict, crisis and violence. Others like Akeem (2011) and Olukemi and Babatunde (2013) citing Iweala and Kwaako (2007) also observed in their study that the Nigerian public sector is populated by unskilled and unmotivated employees. Hence, interplay of adverse work environment or conditions and a highly demotivated workforce dovetail to undermine efficiency in public service delivery.

Consequently, by way of literature review, we examined trade unions to mean any combination of temporary or permanent workers, the purpose of which is to regulate the terms and conditions of employment of workers according to the Trade Union Act Cap. T14 Laws of the Federation and the role of Association of Senior Civil Servants of Nigeria (ASCSN) which include; to redress the bargaining power of the employer by providing collective support to the individual workers, to secure improved term and conditions of employment of their members, to secure maximum degree of job security and to increase the extent to which it can exercise democratic power in decision making over issues that affect their membership at the national corporate or plant level as cited in ASCSN (2015) and Fashoyin (2014) it is doubtful whether the union have kept pace with its roles and meeting the objectives and goals for which it was established in the first place. we also, examined the concept of 'productivity' cited in studies carried out by different scholars such as Williamson (2016) Okpikwe et al (2015), Amah and Ahiauzu (2013), Arolowo (2012), Omar (2014) and Jallette (2002) all agreed that organizational productivity means; organization being productive, fertile or efficient to the extent that there is positive synergy or collaborative relationship between the union and Management targeted towards the realization of organizational goals; and thus, serving the interest of all stake holders through quality time management and service delivery.

We also examined the concept of 'commitment' cited in several liberal scholars work such as Shahide (2013), Mackenzie (2015), Moses (2014), Gill and Meyer (2013) Deery et al (2013) and Jaja (2002) all shared the proposition that no organization in the current ambitious world can operate at peak levels unless the workers union is engaging management as complementary partners in progress and ensuring that each employee is committed to the organizations' objectives and performs as effective team member, hence, there is still a gap in knowledge in terms of providing empirical links between trade union activities and productivity in the public sector. It is the need to fill the identified gap in knowledge that this study examined the issue of trade union commitment and organizational productivity using the ASCSN in the Ministry of Labour and Employment as its reference point. Hence, the key hypothetical assumption of the study is that the ASCSN commitment to members and their level of involvement in collective bargaining, industrial democracy, industrial peace and harmony would determine the level of productivity in Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment. The key indicators of commitment that were measured are; number of engagements with management on workers' welfare, level of satisfaction among workers/members; decreased intention to leave their jobs and reduced absenteeism. Similarly, productivity was measured using the following indicators; number of tasks performed by staff; timely delivery of tasks, quality of tasks completed and time-off versus time-on by staff.

Theoretical Frame Work

Management by objective (MBO) adopted for the study is one of the most widely accepted timeless philosophy of management in modern business world.

It is a participatory and democratic style of management, also known as business strategic planning management theory popularized by Peter Drucker the father of modern corporate organization since 1954. It has been reviewed by many scholars especially the Harvard Business Review of (2009), (2014) and (2015) observed that MBO is a management model that aims to improve performance of an organization by clearly and defining objectives that are agreed to by both management and employees (union)

The key assumption of MBO is centered on organizational effectiveness and performance through Improvement of terms and conditions of employment with good pay, which is lacking in the Nigerian public sector organizations. MBO also prescribes, Mutual trust between workers representative and Management,

Recognition of common goals between the Management and workers, Management and Unions must approach work relations issues proactively/creatively and to engage in deep and robust social dialogue in practice rather than pay lip service to problems in workplaces.

The rationale for adopting MBO for the study is based on its central message, MBO is focused on how organizations can make the most of their human assets, it prescribed collaborations through partnering and alliance with workers in policy making and setting up of organizational objectives that protect the interest of all stakeholder to ensure effective service delivery.

MBO is anchored on the principle of Workers representative and Management to be more reasonable, flexible, yielding and genuinely open and transparent regarding the issues of improvement of terms and conditions of employment that will motivate workers for greater performance which is also lacking in work relations between Management and Unions in Nigerian public sector organizations.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed the mixed method research design involving the cross-sectional survey and analytical approach. In doing this, we relied on the triangulation of qualitative (use of questionnaire, FGD and IDI) approaches of data collection and analysis. A structured questionnaire was used for the quantitative study, while In-depth Interviews (IDIs) & Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) for qualitative study. The content analysis for the qualitative data was simple percentages with the aid of descriptive tools such as graphs and charts for quantitative data. The study was carried out in all State Chapters of ASCSN/labour offices of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja Nigeria. The fieldwork was however, conducted in eight (8) state chapters/labour offices of the Ministry among which include: Rivers, Bayelsa, Imo, Abia, Lagos, Ogun, Nasarawa and Abuja the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). While the universe for the study covers all senior employees who are union members of Association of Senior Civil Servants of Nigeria of Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment in Nigeria numbering 2178 according to the Ministry's current human capital record of senior employees 2016/2017.

Table 1.1: Population Distribution of ASCSN/Senior Employees in Nigeria

S/N	Union State Chapter/Labour Office	Name of Union	No. of Union Member/Senior Employees of FML&E
1	Abia State	ASCSN	72
2	Adamawa State	ASCSN	39
3	Akwa Ibom State	ASCSN	52
4	Anambra State	ASCSN	79
5	Bauchi State	ASCSN	51
6	Bayelsa State	ASCSN	60
7	Benue State	ASCSN	42
8	Borno State	ASCSN	62
9	Cross River State	ASCSN	50
10	Delta State	ASCSN	43
11	Ebonyi State	ASCSN	57
12	Edo State	ASCSN	62
13	Ekiti State	ASCSN	43
14	Enugu State	ASCSN	72
15	Gombe State	ASCSN	43
16	Imo State	ASCSN	60
17	Jigawa State	ASCSN	52

18	Kaduna State	ASCSN	77
19	Kano State	ASCSN	92
20	Katsina State	ASCSN	62
21	Kebbi State	ASCSN	43
22	Kogi State	ASCSN	52
23	Kwara State	ASCSN	43
24	Lagos State	ASCSN	101
25	Nasarawa State	ASCSN	51
26	Niger State	ASCSN	32
27	Ogun State	ASCSN	64
28	Ondo State	ASCSN	48
29	Oyo State	ASCSN	82
30	Plateau State	ASCSN	77
31	Rivers State	ASCSN	97
32	Sokoto State	ASCSN	72
33	Taraba State	ASCSN	52
34	Yobe State	ASCSN	43
35	Zamfara	ASCSN	32
36	FCT	ASCSN	119
	Total		2178

Source: Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment (2017-2018).

In order to get an appropriate sample size for the survey, the researcher utilized the Taro Yamane formula with 95% confidence level. The Taro Yamane formula was adopted since the study population is finite.

Taro Yamane formula: $n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where: n = sample size required; N = study population; e = margin error (0.5%)

Computing the data into the formula, this implies that:

$$n = \frac{2178}{1 + 2178 (0.05)^2} \quad n = \frac{2178}{1 + 2178 (0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{2178}{1 + 5.445} \quad n = \frac{2178}{6.445} = 338$$

Drawing from the foregoing, the sample size for the study is 338. This implies that 338 respondents were sampled for the study. Also, two types of sampling techniques were adopted for this study. Firstly, for the quantitative aspect of the study, the simple random sampling technique was utilized to select participants in the study. To achieve this, each participant in the study sample was given equal chance to participate in the study through a simple ballot process. This culminated in the selection of 338 respondents that were disproportionately distributed among the selected eight (8) labour offices/state chapters of ASCSN across the country. The choice of a disproportionate sampling technique is as a result of the unequal distribution of staff/union members across the eight states.

Sample Distribution For Quantitative Study

S/N	Union State Chapter/Labour Office	Name of Union	No. of Questionnaires administered	Percentage
1	Abia	ASCSN	35	10.4
2	Abuja	ASCSN	70	20.7
3	Bayelsa	ASCSN	27	7.9
4	Imo	ASCSN	48	14.2
5	Lagos	ASCSN	55	16.3
6	Nasarawa	ASCSN	20	5.9
7	Ogun	ASCSN	30	8.9
8	Rivers	ASCSN	53	15.7
	Total	ASCSN	338	100

Source: Author’s Compilation (2017/2018)

Distribution of Respondents for In-depth-Interviews

Category of Respondents	Distribution Per State	Total
Deputy Directors	1 X 2	2
State Controllers	1 X 2	2
Chief Factory Officers	1 X 2	2
Chief Trade Testing Officers	1 X 2	2
State Chapter Union Chairmen	1 X 2	2
State Chapter Union Secretaries	1 X 2	2
TOTAL		12

Source: Author’s Compilation 2017/2018

Distribution of Respondents for Focus Group Discussions

Category of Respondents	Distribution Per State	Total
Clerical Officers	1 X 8	8
Accounting Officers	1 X 8	8
Labour Officers	1 X 8	8
Factory Officers	1 X 8	8
State Trade Union Officials	1 X 8	8
Assistant labour/Factory Inspector	1 X 8	8
TOTAL		48

Source: Author’s Compilation 2017/2018.

Furthermore, the researcher relied on primary and secondary sources. Secondary data were sourced from published articles, journals and conference notes that are related to the subject of study. For primary data, the study ensured a triangulation of techniques as both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were utilized. For quantitative data collection, the structured questionnaire was utilized. The questionnaire consists of 30 questions designed to address the research objectives; it also took account of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. More so, for qualitative data, in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were employed. Interview guide designed with open ended questions that allowed interviewers to pursue other lines of inquiry that emerged during interviews was also employed. Also, the study relied on consultations with project supervisors and other experts to ensure research instruments measured the specific study objectives and also establish the reliability of the instrument through the test-retest technique was adopted resulting to a reliability coefficient of 0.6.

In addition, the quantitative data retrieved from the questionnaire were edited, cleaned and subjected to univariate and bivariate analysis with the use of simple percentages and descriptive statistics. More so, for the qualitative data, the researcher adopted the content analysis technique which is aimed at providing interpretations of the respondents' views on the subject matter. It involved the use of excerpts from the recorded interviews. In doing this, the tapes from the in-depth and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were transcribed verbatim. Thereafter, transcripts were double-checked for consistency and accuracy by the researcher and other experienced field aids. Transcripts were sent back to the interviewees for consistency recheck and validation. In addition, the researcher independently reviewed the transcripts several times to become familiar with the data before the process of sorting, coding and theme identification. Themes were developed based on an inductive process of issues emerging from the data. Initially, themes independently developed by the researcher were compared for similarity, and those that differed were subjected to a discussion, based on the study objectives, on whether to include or exclude them from the analysis. This process culminated in a final list of themes and sub-themes that were discussed and reviewed vis-à-vis the objectives of the study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The aim of this study was to investigate ASCSN's commitment to improve workers conditions of employment and organizational productivity in the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment. In addressing this objective, a specific research question was put forward to respondents: *Does ASCSN commitment to improve workers terms and conditions of employment lead to organizational productivity in Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment?*

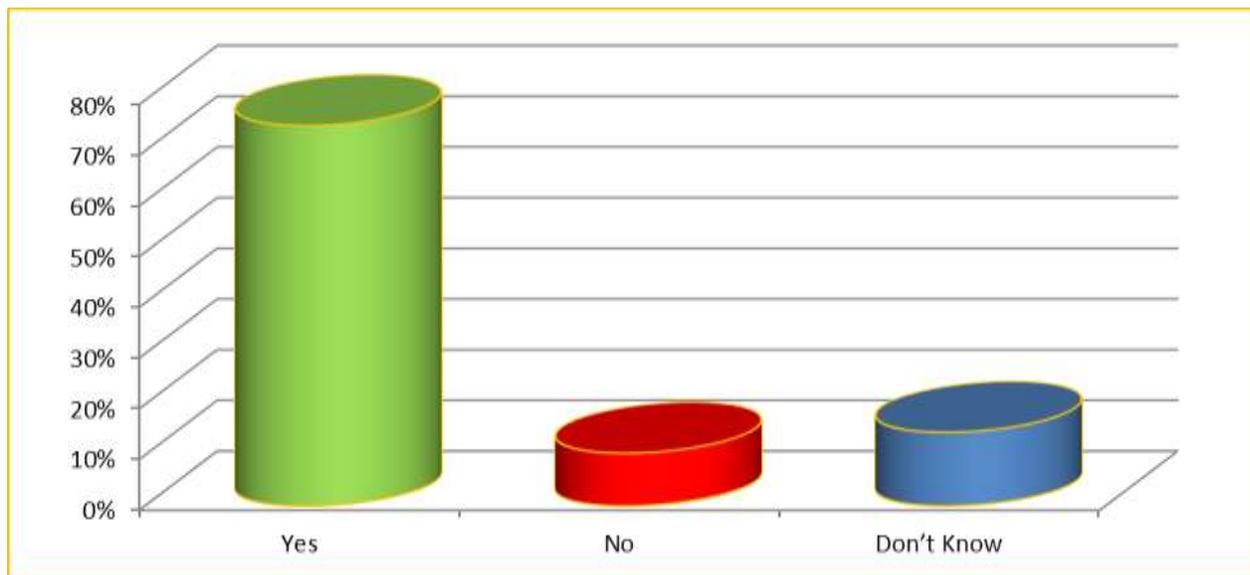


Figure 1.1: Respondents Opinion on whether ASCSN commitment to improve workers terms and conditions of employment leads to organizational productivity

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Results from the data analysis as indicated in Figure 1 above shows that out of the 338 respondents who participated in the study, 254 (75%) of them said 'yes' to the assertion that ASCSN commitment to workers welfare would lead to organizational productivity, 35 (10%) of the respondents said 'no' while 49 (15%) of them said they 'don't know'. This implies that a significant number of the respondents agree that ASCSN commitment to workers welfare would promote organizational productivity.

FGD's and IDI Outcomes

A lead respondent's opinion revealed that it is the lack of commitment on the part of the ASCSN to protect jobs and improve workers terms and conditions of employment that have led to the paradox of poor public service, as administrators and employees discharges their duties with less efficiency and careless abandon, hence;

'if the ASCSN leadership will realize the union role and learn the art of sound diplomacy to strike strategic welfare pacts and alliances just as the private sector unions do and are doing, then that will automatically lead to organizational productivity'. Senior Labour Officer (SLO)FGD Uyo Labour office 12TH July 2019.

The same argument was equally put forward on the issue of collective bargaining \ industrial democracy, according to a top union official in IDI, encapsulated the inextricable link between effective collective bargaining and the ASCSN commitment to productivity thus:

'the reality of the matter is that the poor conduct of employees in the public service is simply a reflection of poor welfare packages and conditions of employment and until the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment realizes the need to advise the government right with a view to correct all the perpetuated unwholesome labour practices by the Nigerian employers with regards to power imbalance in collective bargaining which have engendered on a very unfortunate sad note, the poor quality work-life leading to poor service delivery in the public sector. Socioeconomic growth and development would never be realized in Nigeria'.

Thus far, a wholesome analysis of the core lines of both arguments is that the public service have changed and very unfortunately for the worse, hence, they all agreed with the view that if the government refuses to make positive changes in workers terms and conditions of employment in line with the changes occurring in developed economies all around the globe, but rather choose to isolate and quarantine itself, its doom becomes predictable. The proposition here is that terms and conditions of employment would improve when the ASCSN is committed to productivity and that would be realized when the mode of approach adopted by both Management and Unions towards ongoing changes around the world, especially with regards to industrial relations best practices in social dialogue with effective mechanism for compliant with international and Nigerian labour laws changes for good.

FINDINGS

The study found that the ASCSN and its members are key to Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment continued success, sadly, the ASCSN can not demonstrate sufficient effort to improve workers conditions of employment, therefore, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment is less productive due to underlying unfair labour practices in the industrial relations system that are blocking the chances for team work between the management and unions which ideally, would have led to employees top performance and greater normalization of organizational efficiency and productivity in the Ministry.

CONCLUSION

The issue of ASCSN commitment to improve workers conditions of employment and organizational productivity are twin key issues of vital important to organizational behaviour.

The study has shown that the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment is less productive due to underground unfair and anti union industrial relations issues blocking the chances for team work between the management and unions.

It is important to observe that the ability of ASCSN commitment to seek the improvement of workers conditions of employment and the expected co relational desire for organizational productivity can only be achieved if management and the unions are able to achieve their distinct goals and interest from the work environment – with little or no rancor, just as the unions' interest must transcend beyond the welfare of its members to ensuring the efficient management of the organizational resources, so must management accord the unions the desired recognition and engage them as partners in progress. The

partnership between management and the union is the key to creating and sustaining decent and productive work in the Nigerian public sector. According to Henry Ford cited in Fitz-Enz (1995) coming together is a beginning, staying together the progress, and working together the success. This means that management and union need to find common ground for joint decision making and generate ideas that are focused on winning together and achieving the same goal for the good of all. Regrettably, this is not the case in Nigeria, hence, the need for collaboration through partnering and alliances with unions as major stakeholders especially in the public sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are put forward:

- 1) There is need to strengthen the relevant dispute resolution institutions to ensure their efficiency so as to engender a Free and fair industrial relations climate for IR best practices to thrive
- 2) Management and Unions need to move work relations towards collaboration / partnership that will lead to deep, robust, constructive and productive social dialogue in arriving at decisions that affect workers terms and conditions of employment directly.

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