



THE ROLES OF LABOUR UNION IN NIGERIA INDUSTRIAL HARMONY AND DEVELOPMENT

Obiekwe, Onyebuchi^{1*}
Obibhunun, Lucky²

^{1,2}Department of Management Rivers State University, Port
Harcourt, Nigeria

¹Email: noobekhezson@yahoo.com

²Email: obilu@yahoo.com



(+ Corresponding author)

ABSTRACT

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This paper examined the roles of labour union in Nigeria industrial harmony and development. It notes that strong and united labour unions are pre-requisites to industrial and national development of any nation. Some objectives of trade unions such as negotiation, representative body, maintenance of employee-employer relationship, and promotion of member's welfares were noted and discussed. The paper also observed that workers join union because of job security, need for adequate wages and benefits, power in group for collective bargaining and need to associate with others. Some challenges facing labour unions in Nigeria such as disunity, financial weakness, weak collective bargaining process and dishonest attitude of trade union leaders were identified. The paper concluded that disunity and politicization of trade union are major obstacles for the development of strong and stable trade unions which is an integral part of cordial industrial relations. In addition, a strong and enlightened labour union is vital for good industrial relations system and help to promote the interest of labour union. It is recommended, among others, that unions should identify current trend in industrial relations and educate their members to anticipate for the changes brought about by environmental forces affecting industries. Trade unions should create a level playing ground for all members to take part in the decision making machinery of their unions. Union members should ensure that only qualified, tested and trusted leaders who are truly workers should be voted into offices both at the local, state and national level. In addition, union leaders should be properly trained and educated to know the basic labour and industrial laws of the country in order to plan their actions within the provisions of the laws. Trade unions should also provide for the adequate training of their members in order to give room for advancement of their members.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributed new knowledge to existing management literature. It examined the roles, objective and challenges of labour union in Nigeria. The primary contribution is finding that a united and proactive labour union is vital in maintaining a progressive and harmonious management-worker relationship which drives industrial harmony and development.

1. INTRODUCTION

The existence of a strong, united and recognized trade union is a pre-requisite to the industrial harmony and development pace of any country. Today, there is a high and developing interest and recognition of individual freedom to freely associate with groups or association of one's interest. This right has also been recognized in industries as workers now freely elect or choose to join groups and associate in unions and to engaged in collective

bargaining with employers. This right has also been provided for by different countries in various ways in order to bring about enduring industrial harmony and national economic development. The development of labour union is as a result of reaction to management's use of its decision-making power in ways that are workers anti-friendly or excessive. These reactions of workers have centered on basic economic issues and other resource interest. [Heneman et al. \(1983\)](#) state that unions frequently develop because their members are frustrated in achieving important goals on an individual basis, and collective action is therefore the only countervailing technique available to effectively achieve these important individual desires. In other words, since an individual persuasion of management does not yield the required or expected results, a form of collective pursuance is therefore necessary to achieve those same goals for the individuals.

In the wake of early industrial revolutions, the employers act and behave as lords who have the final say on every matter that concerns the workers in the workplace. The employers or managers are so powerful that they can decide the fate of any individual who on his or her own is powerless, and weak to fight back or challenge any indiscriminate action of the management. In realization of these, workers come together and seek to institute their terms and conditions of employment as group matters much more than an individual would be in the demands and negotiation of better conditions and terms of employment in industrial setting. Trade union movement and their activities are vital parts of our industrial relations. The coming together of employees to seek for improvement on their terms and conditions of employment by the employers is today a major role of trade union. In pursuance of this and other roles, a friendly harmonious industrial relationship has been a critical concern of any responsible labour union.

[Okojie \(2011\)](#) notes that trade union emerged in Nigeria at a time when representative political democracy was not even in existence. He pointed out that the British Colonial Government began making formal inroads on the field of labour relations in the thirties after the trade union ordinance of 1938. Therefore, trade unions represent a voluntary association whose membership comprises of salary earners, employees and union leaders. [Peter \(2000\)](#) observes that the major concerns of Unions have been 'improved living standards, equity and justice to workers. The achievement of this objective and other intentions of coming together as a union however, depend on the unity and strong influence that trade unions have, and how they are seen by the employers in the industrial setting. The importance of trade union is mainly in the fact that they are utilized as a representative voice when dealing with employers in workplace, and thus attempt to improve the employment conditions of their members through the collective bargaining procedure.

In today's industrial setting in Nigeria, it is however very disheartening to discover high level of union disunity and politicization, a situation that has reduced labour unions to mere toothless bulldogs and pawns in the hands of politicians and managers, and has made many labour unions fail in the roles and functions in bringing about peaceful and harmonious industrial harmony and development. This paper therefore takes a theoretical excursion into examining the roles of labour union in Nigeria's industrial harmony and development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Definition of Trade Union

Different definitions have been given for labour union by authors. According to [Tokubvo \(1985\)](#) in [Collins \(2013\)](#) a labour union is 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 to conversely ensure commitment to work by its members in a way that, it 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 related to the condition of employment of their members ([Adefolaju, 2013](#)). According to [Hyman \(2001\)](#) it is the continuous association of wage earners for the purpose of sustaining and enhancement of their workplace conditions.

The Nigerian Trade Union Act of 1973 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 purposes being in restraint of trade and whether its purpose do or do not include the provision of benefits to members”.

Uvieghara (2001) observed that the two significant criteria of this definition for determining whether an association is a trade union are: the combination must be of workers or employers and, that it must have the 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. In the words of Webb and Webb (1894) it is a continuous association of wage earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their working lives. In this sense, employees in a union seek to use the union to protect and promote their own interest in the workplace, mainly by means of collective bargaining and consultations with employers. Labour union thus, is a platform utilized 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 which the management entered into with the workers. In this sense, a labour union can be seen an organization of wage earners or salary workers established for the purpose of protecting members collective interests in their dealing with employers and in the wider society using the process of rule-making and collective bargaining in an industrial settings or workplace. Labour union is therefore vital for the improvement of the workers quality of life.

2.2. Objectives of Trade Union

Labour unions have different objectives they seek to achieve. Broadly speaking, every association is formed to achieve certain goals. According to Uvieghara (2001) “the purpose for which association is formed is the distinguishing characteristics of a trade union from other association”. Heneman *et al.* (1983) posit that the goals of unions are to increase total membership through improvement of economic and other conditions of employment for present and potential members.

The principal objective of labour union 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 industrial settings. In addition, other objectives of trade union 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 organizations¹. 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 whole protecting their members against inhumane, unjust and unfair treatment from management at workplace. In other words, the major objectives of trade unions include the followings: negotiation, representing body, personnel policies, employee-employee relation, employee’s welfare, and employee protection.

Labour unions have the objective of carrying out negotiations on behalf of members: Union seeks to achieve this objective through collective bargaining process put in place in the organization. Union uses collective bargaining to negotiate and cover work rule and procedure, grievance procedure, health and safety polices, promotion, retirement, among others. This is so because individual workers find it difficult to negotiate every term of contract that has to do with work relationship with their employers. Since there is ‘power in number’s, labour

¹ <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/tradeunion.html>

unions seeks to utilize mobilize their members and present a common front in their negotiation and demands from managements.

Representation of members is another major objective of labour unions: Labour unions seek to represent her member when approached during disciplinary or grievance hearing. In such situations, the union representative will support the employee on the meeting with the management. In this regard, unions are utilized as representing voices when dealing employers. Closely allied to this objective is the maintenance of employee-employer relations: The achievement of both the employers and employees goals depends on a peaceful and harmonious relationship. This state of relationship is possible when trade union strives to achieve these objectives. For example, when conflict arises between worker and management, trade unions tries to resolve the conflict by initiating negotiations with the management with the aim of achieving a harmonious relation that will help to enhance effectiveness. When there is conflicts and disharmony, the achievement of organizational and individual workers goals and objective becomes very difficulty. Labour Unions also seek the promotion of member's welfare. This is one of the major objectives of trade union. In this regard, trade union work as both a guide and counsellor to workers in giving them the necessary advice about any work related problem. It also provides its members legal advices and financial assistance when it is most needed. By ensuring that the terms and conditions of employment of its members are just and fair, it seeks to promote their general welfare.

Another objective of Labour Union is ensuring good personnel policies. Union seeks to ensure that good personnel policies are in place for workers in the workplace. As a result, may oppose management over poor or improper respect to recruitment, selection, training, promotion, health and safety, retirement and death policies. Most often, union's advice personnel managers above best industrial standards on personnel matters through union representatives. [Ubeku \(1983\)](#) has noted that the aims and objectives of labour unions is to obtain better condition of service and employment for their members. To achieve these objectives of trade union requires that union leaders should be proactive and knowledgeable about the labour laws of the country, and also have the appropriate negotiating skills needed to win the sympathy and heart of the management during any collective bargaining meeting. However, for collective bargaining to be effective, trade union and employers need to come to agreement on how grievance and disciplinary procedure, as well as personnel policies of the organization need to be effective. Most of these points depend on the union leaders negotiating and leadership skills, knowledge of relevant labour and industrial laws, and their ability to mobilize and coordinate every union member to follow given instructions.

2.3. Reasons Why Workers Join Union

Trade Unions perform some vital functions for their members that make other workers always willing to join. According to [Chand \(2016\)](#) workers join trade union because of some expected benefits which includes job security wages and benefits, working conditions, fair and just supervision, powerlessness and the need to belong.

Job security: Every worker wants security of their employment. No one wants management to wake up one day and indiscriminately announces termination of his or her appointment or employment. As a result of this, workers join union to ensure that their jobs are security protected against indiscriminate and unjustified terminations.

Adequate wages and Benefits: Trade union are known for championing the campaign for better and equitable wages and associated be work benefits for their members. They engage management in discussion in need to pay good wage. Workers therefore join unions with the belief that the union will ensure that management pay what is just and fair in wages and salary. Unions are also believe to negotiate with management on other work benefits such as person, vacation, medical facility, paid sick leave, and such other things that the union may see as expedient for their members.

Power in groups: Most employees have realized that it is very difficult for an individual to successfully bargain terms and conditions of employment. Employees therefore join unions because they believe that there will be power in unity. They also perceive that they will be powerless and voiceless when dealing with management as individual workers. Therefore, joining unions provide a strong, collective and powerful force to 'challenge unfair and unjust management policies, and to bargain with management where individual voices cannot be heard.

Need to associate with others: No man can truly survive in isolation. No man is an island. Man by nature loves to relate and share with others, and also has a strong need to belong or associate with others. Association with others gives a worker the opportunity of sharing his or her feelings and opinion. In workplace, unions provide people the opportunity of coming together to consider, pursue and promote common job-related interest, and also help workers to socialize with others.

Protection from Unjust Supervision: The fear of being unjustly and unfairly treated by managers and supervisors is another reason why workers join union. Most often, some managers who lack the requisite human relation skills try to impose their opinions and desires on their entire subordinate, and also mistreat them because of his influence over them. To avoid unjust supervisors' excesses. With employees in union, the union is in position to intervene with any unfair or unjust action of such manager.

Bakke (1945) contend that:

"The worker reacts favourably to union membership in proportion to the strength of his belief that the step will reduce his frustrations and anxiety and will further his opportunities relevant to the achievement of his standards of successful living. He reacts unfavourably in proportion to the strength of his belief that this step will increase his that this step will increase his frustrations and anxieties and will reduce his opportunities relevant to the achievement of such standards".

2.4. Characteristics of Trade Union

Certain features distinguish trade union from other associations. Some of the distinguishing features include: Common goals and interest of members; trade union members share common goals and interest and seek to pursue same for the entire members. These interests could range from better terms and condition of employment, safe and healthy work conditions, job security, better wages and benefit and general support against unfair managerial decisions. Another characteristic of trade union is voluntary membership: Membership of trade union is basically voluntary. Worker are free to join or not to join cohering workers to join a union is in contrast to the very essence of trade union in Nigeria, however, law mandate every member of certain profession to belong to that union, i.e. Nigerian Medical Association(NMA) Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) etc.

Continuous association is another feature of trade union. Labour union activities do not end in a day. It is a continuous activity. Though a member may decide to opt out, labour union membership may demand a long term status. Additionally, unions are egalitarian union. This is because trade unions conduct their affairs by themselves and this enables them to act in our society. In other words, they are classless, democratic and self-governed. Finally, trade union is an association of workers and salary earner.

2.5. Trade Union Problems in Nigeria

Trade unions are experiencing different challenges all over the world, and Nigeria is not an exception. These challenges have reduced the effectiveness and efficiency of trade unions in pursuing the roles for which they are formed. According to Rajesh and Manoj (2015) the major problems of trade union include; uneven growth, leadership issues, inter-union rivalry, financial weakness, weak collective bargaining process and chameleonic attitudes of trade union leaders. In addition, wrong mentality of trade union or lacks of internal union democracy are problems of labour and unions in Nigeria (Okojie, 2011). On his own, Gangurde (2014) identify lack of unity, low priority policy makers, unorganized sector, and in-formalization of labour relations as the major challenges of

trade unions in India. Among the major problems noted by Okojie (2011) as problems facing trade union in Nigeria are lack of internal democracy and lack of credible leaders due to internal party wrangling.

Another major problem of trade union in Nigeria is political interest of some trade union leaders. This has made some trade unions in Nigeria been dominated by leaders who has little or no interest on the plight of the workers, but want to use their positions to gain political relevance and in exploiting workers for their political interest. The interests of the workers are not protected by the leader-politicians masquerading as labour leaders. Very often, negotiations with employers, both at public and private sectors fail due to such political leadership, as the interest and welfare of the workers are very often ignored during negotiations, especially when they are promised juicy appointments in ministries, or are heavily induced financially. Observations show that former leaders of notable labour unions few years ago are today fully fledged politicians. Even when some of them are voted into political offices in the country, they have resorted to excuses and have also failed to treat the workers fairly, and labour unions have always been at logger heads with them, and even going on strikes.

Closely allied to this is outside leadership of unions and political leaders of unions. Sometimes, people who are not members of labour union are appointed as the leaders by government and company's management. The domination of political leaders on the main is due to the absence of full time union workers. These outsiders or political leaders lack the knowledge of basic principles and practices of trade unionism, and only devote limited time and energy to trade union activities. When this happens, union members will not trust the leaders and consider them as pawns in the hands of government and company's management, as well as enemies to the wellbeing of union members. Experiences have showed that these appointed outsiders who does not share the feelings of the workers will not fight for the interest of union members, but for that of their masters that appointed them. This always results to conflicts and lack of industrial peace should the workers decides not to take instructions from these "outsiders". Hence, outside leadership acts as a major problem of trade unions in Nigeria.

Inter union rivalry is another challenge of labour union in Nigeria. On account of multiple unions there occurs a problem of union rivalry. Unions try to play down each other in a bid to gain greater influence among workers. In the process they do more harm than good to the cause of unionism as a whole. Employers are given an opportunity to play unions against each other. They can refuse to bargain on the contention that there is not true representative union. Besides this, the workers' own solidarity is lost. Employers are able to take advantage of infighting between workers groups. Solution to this problem can be found in secret ballot vote. After some stipulated time period say two years or so, the workers should go to polls to elect their representative union for that duration. This would do away with both multiplicity of unions and union rivalry.

Another major challenge of trade union is opposition of management. Most often some organization's managements, especially, those of the private sector sees labour unions as enemies who must be stopped and never be allowed to exist in their firms, they felt that allowing labour unions freedom to operate in their firms will give the workers opportunities to form a common front in their demands and bargains.

Lack of support from the employers and general public is another major challenge of trade union in Nigeria. While the public sometimes detest them due to their constant strikes and threats of strike actions, go slow policy, and their usually hard line positions, the employers as noted by Olson (1965) consider trade unions as organizations only striving to secure benefits for their members, such as financial gains like raise of wages, bonuses, various allowances insurance benefits, overtime payment and non-financial benefits such as job security, comfortable work places, and recreational facilities and decreasing fear of employer through collective bargaining. In Nigeria, this is a very serious challenge when one considers the hard line position of ASUU and their constant threat of strike action. The manner ASUU executives pronounce strike actions have today made the general public detest the union whenever an issue concerning ASUU and the Federal government is raised. This position is especially true of most parents, students and other labour union members who sees most ASUU's actions as creating and adding additional

cost and burdens to parents, unusual delays to university students graduations from their academic programmes, as well as a negative influence on students' academic performances.

Another challenge of trade union in Nigeria is lack of unity among unions. In fact, union disunity has reach the all time high that even people in the street are aware that trade unions leaders are divided and are fighting for their own immediate material wealth and benefits instead of the total welfare of the union members. This has started for a long time and has been aggravated with time, and more divisions is likely to be witness if genuine efforts are not put in place to check and stop the ugly incidence. Today, trade union is divided along many lines such as political and tribe lives. This have been made clear since labour unions have started to join forces with some political parties to openly challenge government policies and decisions at rallies and meetings organized by ruling or opposing political parties.

As it is in Nigeria today, the Nigerian Labour Congress, which is the umbrella body of all labour unions has at different times paraded two different National executive officers with both groups claiming to represent the interest of the Nigerian workers. In some instances, the different executive groups will mark different union National programmes or activities at different venues. For instance, in 2016, while one faction is celebrating workers day at Abuja, another faction was doing the same function at Lagos. In fact, the same disunity is been witnessed in most of the thirty six states of the Federation. For instance, in 2015, when faction of Rivers State chapter of Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) declared a strike action for non-payment of about three months salaries of the state civil service employees, another faction immediately called on the state civil servants to disregard the misleading information, that they are already on discussion with the state government to settles the issues. Worse still, these different factions have failed to see common grounds to come together to fight for the common interest and issues affecting the union members.

The major reason for this much disunity among trade union in Nigeria is that union leaders do not give room for internal party democracy. There is also no room for union members to participate, decide or vote on policy issues or to elect their union official. These result to unwillingness of the majority to attend branch meetings or take part in policy debates and elections. When this is the prevailing circumstance, aggrieved members will oppose the union leadership and seek to remove them by use of provision of the union bye-laws or passing a vote of no confidence on them. This will however, generate disunity as loyalist of the embattled officers will rally round to defend them. Trade unions cannot flourish when a small number of powerful officers manipulate Union activities and programmes for their own ends in order to retain their own power and authority. As [Adefolaju \(2013\)](#) note, most labour union officials tend to covert the union machinery for personal aggrandizement while trading away the union.

Another serious challenge of labour union in Nigeria is union politicization. In a country where everything is grist to the politician's mill, it is not surprising that politicians should also "use" trade unions for their selfish ends ([Jaywant, 2014](#)). Technically, labour organizations as independent bodies should report only to their members but, in practice, they are putty in the hands of ambitious, and more often than not, unscrupulous politicians. This is especially true of labour unions in Nigeria both at the federal and state levels. Today, many acclaimed labour leaders have not only shown open support to some political parties or their candidates during elections, but are actual active politicians in the camps of the ruling party or major opposition parties. For example, when the Nigeria Federal government announced its intention to remove fuel subsidy during President Goodluck Jonathan's administration, the Nigerian Labour Congress and Trade Union Congress of Nigeria join hands with the leading opposition parties to accuse the President (Dr. Jonathan) of insensitivity to the plights of Nigerian workers (union members) and that of the common Nigerians, and also stage various nation-wide protest, but when President Buhari from another party took over at the helm of affairs of the country and announce the removal of same in less than two year in office, the Nigerian Labour Congress and Trade Union Congress of Nigeria and other unions that held

several days of nation-wide demonstration and protests over the intended removal of subsidy 'went to sleep' and never protested or raise an eye brow over the fuel subsidy matter.

2.6. Roles of Trade Union in Industrial Harmony and Development of Nigeria Organizations

The roles which trade unions play are influenced by their own characteristics as much as by their environment. On the whole, trade unions perform various roles that are very significant that filled an important gap in the Nigerian industrial environment. These various roles of unions are important elements in good industrial relations. [Otobo and Omole \(1987\)](#) identify five key roles of unions in Nigeria. These roles are welfare of their members, industrial peace, democratic processes, productivity and economic and social progress. This role not only brings about enhancement in the conditions of work, employment and wages of workers but also lead to great competence among workers.

One important role of labour union is the effective promotion of collective bargaining agreement. In every industrial and economic setting, trade unions constitute an in element of fundamental importance to collective bargaining, which is vital for industrial peace and harmony. Every labor union in Nigeria sees this as a major role they are expected to carry out. Labour union uses collective bargaining agreement to secure fair wages and benefits, as well as fair working hours, and better standards necessary for wage increases. Labour unions also use the medium to stop employees from being fired without just cause, and other arbitrary and unjust actions of managers against the employees. Through the collective bargaining process, the labour union saves the employer much time that he could have used in negotiating with workers individually. These times that are saved through collective bargaining process can be employed by management to consider other challenges affecting the organization or in strategizing ways to achieve competitive advantage over competitors. In this role, labour union is seen as a spokesperson for the employees.

Trade unions promote and sustain peace and harmony in work environment: This is because, any decision agreed upon collectively by workers and management is bound to command obedience of and respect among the general body of workers and employers also cannot afford to treat such decisions in a light manner. [Muya and Simotwo \(2015\)](#) note that labour union can act as indirect catalyst for creation of harmonious work environment. This role is always effective when there is continual negotiation with employers over issues that relate to employees work conditions in order to avoid employer-employee conflict. This role creates a feeling of self respect and confidence among union members, and also ensures that parties in the agreement live up to their billings. In Nigeria, the Nigerian Labour Congress, PENGASSAN, and others play this role effectively. This role enables labour union to ensure that cordial and good understanding between employers and employees could be established in work place and leads to a harmonious and conducive working environment. It is such environment that results to higher organizational and individual productivity. This role helps to safeguard organizational stability, growth and leadership.

Contribution to member's welfare: [Otobo and Omole \(1987\)](#) observed that the role of unions can be considered in terms of contributions to the welfare of their members, industrial peace, democratic processes in industrial relations, and productivity to social progress. According to [Singh \(2008\)](#) trade union roles has been to protect jobs and real earning their members, secure better conditions of work and life, and fight against exploitation and arbitrariness to ensure fairness and equity in employment contexts. This view is supports by [Singh and Kulkarni \(2013\)](#) and [Barrientos and Smith \(2007\)](#) when they note that unionization has become instrumental in improving the quality of life of workers. Trade unions thus negotiate improvements to better pay and working condition for their members.

Improvement of organizational productivity: This happens when labour/management conflict are mutually resolved. This means that the settlement makes the workers more confident thereby making them put more effort toward attaining organizational productivity. It is essential to note that labour union play serious and vital role in

resolving of labour/management conflicts. In other words, when labour-management conflicts are resolved, it makes the workers develop more confident thereby making him put more effort toward attaining organizational productivity. Unions also perform such role as increasing workers' productivity or efficiency, improvement of workers discipline, improvement of workplace peace and harmony and participating in decision making with management (Addison and Schnabel, 2003).

Labour union acts as employee's representative. This happens as Labour union represents workers for the purpose of giving them identity by serving as their voice at workplace and society. This is not limited to when there are grievances and the need for improved welfare package for members, but in protecting the interest of the employees by taking active participation in the management.

Based on the discussion above, unions have a vital role to play not only in the management of industrial relations but also in ensuring continuous progress and harmony of the nation. The role of union as agent for collective bargaining and pursuit of member's welfare can have both a positive and negative effect on both the individual and industry. The positive side is that it has helped to bring about industrial harmony between management and employees. Since unions wield much power due to strength in united and collective voice, unions should also channel this power to constructive use in different areas in order to benefit their members and employers and ensure a win-win situation for all parties. Moreover, with a set of highly trained and educated leaders who have good negotiating skills and knowledge of the country's labour law in position to steady the boats of trade unions, trade unions will be seen as great assets and partners in progress by management of industries rather than as liabilities. Above all, trade unions act as watch dog of the workers and general society against bad government and management of companies' policies that is inimical to the well-being of the citizens and workers.

3. CONCLUSION

Trade unions perform some crucial roles and function which making them vital for workers. The successful and effective execution of the roles and functions of labour union enhances the chances of peaceful and harmonious industrial settings in Nigeria. Workers need strong and united trade union, but today, the future of trade unionism in Nigeria seems to be going towards fragmentation. The nation-wide labour union is suffering as it had come merely from national federations which workers are now disinclined to join. Given the multiple challenges facing trade unions in Nigeria, it is essential for trade unions to harness the resources of all its members in order to sustain its growth and healthy development. This, of course can only be possible in the face of effective and honest internal democratic process within the trade unions. 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. Moreover, members of trade unions should take devoted interest in their affairs. They should understand what unionism all about and what demands it makes on individual members as well as feel the need to give the group required support for a common cause. Where this is not the case; trade unionism cannot be expected to make much progress.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

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.

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.

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.

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