Assessment of the Efficacy of Collective Bargaining as a Pathway to Conflict Management in Nigeria’s Public Sector Organizations.

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Abstract
This study evaluated the efficacy of collective bargaining as a pathway to conflict management in Nigeria’s public sector organizations. A sample of 1425 respondents drawn through stratified random sampling technique from six (6) purposively selected public establishments with chequered history of conflict in work-relations in the federal capital city, Abuja, participated in the study. Data were obtained through the use of questionnaire which has a modified 5-point rating scale with a reliability coefficient of 0.796. Descriptive statistics of percentage count, mean and standard deviation were used for the analysis of data collected. The two hypotheses which guided the study were tested using t-test statistical method and Spearman correlation analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The result established a significant difference in the perception of labour and management on collective bargaining as an accommodative device for conflict management in public sector establishments. The study also found a non-significant statistical determinate effect between collective bargaining and conflict management. Specifically, the finding prefigured collective bargaining to be ineffective, indicating the creeping web of governments’ intrigues as one of the main constraints inhibiting the effectiveness of the mechanism. The manifest outcome has been the incessant intense cycle of industrial actions in the Nigerian public sector organizations. The study concluded that collective bargaining is an institutional invention for reconciling conflicting goals of labour and management, but the machinery has not played any central and effectual role in the industrial relations practice of the public sector establishment in Nigeria.

Keywords: Collective Bargaining, Conflict Management, Efficacy, Industrial Harmony and Public Sector Organizations.

Introduction
Contemporary work organizations, whether in the public or private sector of any nation’s economy are predominantly made up of plurality of interest groups with diverse goals and aspirations. These different goals and interests are in perpetual conflict with each other (Ekwoba, Ideh and Ojikutu, 2015). As such, the possibility of elimination of conflict in work-relations seems remote but the spectre can be recognized and managed for the overriding benefits of all stakeholders in organizations. For this reason, collective bargaining has emerged overtime as an accommodative device for regulating and dealing with relational problems between labour and management in the work-situation. The mechanism has served as an effective conflict deterrent, resulting in avoidance of bitter industrial actions and ensuring the promotion of lasting industrial peace and harmony in work-establishments.

According to Bendix (2011), collective bargaining is a rational process in which appeals to fact and logic reconcile conflicting interests in the light of common interest of both parties. Within this context, the approach is seen as an essential tool of institutionalizing and containing
conflicts in the workplace. In dynamic establishments, where collective bargaining is done effectively and in good faith, the outcome is often an amicable resolution of joint problems resulting into collective agreement by labour and management. This implies that effective collective bargaining establishes the set rules between parties during the life-time of a collective agreement and also gives the method of settling grievances that will occur from time to time (Appah and Emeh, 2012).

Within the employment relationship, conflict of interest is an inherent element of labour-management relations. From this perspective, Obi (2013) defined workplace conflict as an act of discontentment and contention which either the workers or employers of labour utilizes to put excessive pressure against each other so as to get their demands. This view is consistent with Muhammad (2014) and Kazimoto (2013) description of workplace conflict as existence of clash of interests or objectives in worker-management relations. On this premise, most industrial conflicts have economic and goal incompatibility in the absence of common values in work establishments. However, through the use of the machinery of collective bargaining, it is possible for labour and management with conflicting goals to relate harmoniously, handle their grievances or disputes by working towards consensus and diminishing the odds of non-productive escalation of conflicts. Ironically, despite the acclaimed purpose of collective bargaining as a veritable tool of industrial peace, no day passes in Nigeria, particularly in public sector organizations without any form or threat of industrial actions. Thus, the most frequent problem in Nigeria in recent times is the incessant industrial action (Uma, Obidike, Eboh and Ogbona, (2013) and Okuwa and Campbell, 2011). According to them, if it is not the National Union of Teachers (NUT), Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), it will be Health workers or other important public sector union. Consequently, the public sector employees’ faith in the use of collective bargaining is fast ebbing away. This is because, the only justification of industrial action in this sector is the dent on the collective bargaining approach.

Thus, by today’s standard, collective bargaining practice seems to be in a deplorable and pitiful situation in the Nigerian public sector establishment. Ibietan (2013) opined that the machinery and process of collective bargaining are not given firm footing particularly in the Nigerian public sector organizations. He added that perfidy or deliberate refusal to honour collective agreements arrived at through the consensual process of collective bargaining are rife among employers or management representatives of some public organizations. Similarly, Fajana and Shadare (2012) asserted that generally, collective bargaining has experienced considerable elevating policy pronouncements, but less in terms of seriousness and effectiveness in various industrial sectors in Nigeria. In contrast however, Ekwuoba, Ideh and Ojikutu (2015), Owoseni (2014) and Bello and Kinge (2014) argued that collective bargaining is a veritable instrument of management of conflict and has played an effective role in conflict resolution in Nigeria public sector organizations. Hence, a wide divergence of opinions exists on the effectiveness of collective bargaining as a tool of conflict management in the public sector organizations in the country.

Presently, there appears to be no consensus of opinions on the subject of study and empirical validation on it has been rather scanty. Thus, a gap exists in the research in this area of strategic importance to sustainable industrial harmony and promotion of cordial industrial relations in the public sector organizations in Nigeria. It is against this backdrop that this study
aims to extend the line of search by assessing the efficacy of collective bargaining as a pathway to conflict management in the context of Nigerian public sector organizations. From this broad objective, the study seeks to explore the following specific objectives, which are to:

i. examine what the perceptions are on collective bargaining as an accommodative device for conflict management in Nigeria public sector organizations,

ii. identify constraints inhibiting the competency of collective bargaining as a pathway to conflict management,

iii. evaluate the effectiveness of collective bargaining as a machinery for conflict management in public sector organizations in Nigeria.

The study will add information to the empirical knowledge about the exact position on the link between collective bargaining and conflict management in public sector organizations, most especially in an emerging economy, like Nigeria.

Literature Review

Conceptual Clarification of Collective Bargaining

The very commoditious term of collective bargaining is neither Nigerian nor an African concept. It is Anglo –Saxon and coined in 1891 by Beatrice Webbs in her work on the cooperative movement. Although, no explicit formal definition was given by her, she construed the concept of collective bargaining as an alternative to individual bargaining, covering negotiation between employer and work people, when both parties acted in concert and met in collective will. The term collective bargaining has since undergone some considerable refinements. Flanders (1970) gave a classic definition of collective bargaining as a social process that continually turns disagreement into agreement in an orderly fashion. This definition goes to establish that it is a mechanism for resolving conflict in a controlled manner and method to inculcate civility and equity into work organizations. Within the participation framework, Rose (2008) defined collective bargaining as a process whereby representatives of employees and employers determine and regulate decision pertaining to both substantive and procedure matters in the employment relationship. Operationalizing this, the framework of collective bargaining can be suggested to include activities such as settlement procedures, conflict management and engagement in concordance economic actions. Hence in practice, collective bargaining advocates the resolution of difference (Murton, Inman and Ossullivan, 2010). However, in Nigeria, there is no conventional definition of collective bargaining. But, under the Nigeria law, Section 91 of the Labour Act, 2004, declared it as a process of arriving at or attempting to arrive at collective agreement. This alludes that collective bargaining defines the rights and responsibilities of both labour and management and where successful, produces a collective agreement which is an outcome of resolved conflict. From the foregoing, it becomes obvious that the approach is an essential strategy of industrial rule – making in which management share decision – making with employees in work – organizations.

Historical Overview of Collective Bargaining Practice in Nigerias' Public Sector

The origin of collective bargaining was considered to have begun in the public sector, where the modern trade unionism first evolved and nurtured in Nigeria. As Fashoyin (1999) put it, the near absence of the private sector in Nigeria at the turn of the 19th century was
responsible. Other scholars (Onah, 2008; Uvieghara, 2001; and Ojo, 1998) corroborated this fact of history, that the genesis of collective bargaining is traceable to the public sector in Nigeria. However, the reverse is the case in the developed nations where collective bargaining gained its roots from the private sector and then moved into the public sector. (Anyim, Eleigbede and Gbajumo-Sherrif, 2011). Nevertheless, the first formal attempt of collective bargaining practice in the Nigeria public sector began with Hunt Commission of 1934 and this agency was enlarged in 1942 to include the representatives of workers. But indeed, both the commission and workers body provided no avenues for grievances resolution (Okogwu, 1992). In consequence, the Cowan Commission of 1951 was established and which recommended the setting-up of the Whitely Councils and departments. According to Omole and Adegoke (1997), the Whitely Councils thus became the machinery for collective bargaining in the public sector, while the departments remained as in-house grievance and consultative bodies. Despite this arrangement, various agitations and discontentment witnessed the labour scene at different periods, culminating in the establishment of numerous commissions of inquiry until the forming of the National Public Sector Negotiation Councils (NPSNCS) in 1974.

The NPSNCS provided the framework for collective bargaining between the public sector as a negotiation unit (comprising the federal and state governments) and the representatives of the Eight (8) civil service unions. But in practice, the NPSNCS were only contrivances which modified the scope and structure and not the efficacy of collective bargaining practice in the public sector organizations in Nigeria. Rather, the use of Ad-hoc Wages Commission periodically appointed by governments was the mode by which employment conditions were regulated and not through the machinery of collective bargaining. This primacy use of Ad-hoc Commission in addressing workers demand such as wages determination and other conditions of employment is unilateral and undemocratic as it negates good industrial relations principle which collective bargaining portends. (Chidi, 2010). The promulgation of 2005 Trade Union Amendment Act and the 2006 Government White paper of the Presidential Committee on the consolidation of Emoluments in the Nigeria public sector headed by Shonekan (a former Interim government President in the country) appeared only partially to have altered the pattern of collective bargaining practice. The Shonekan report recommended new bargaining structures with collegiate representations of management and representatives of all industrial unions in public sector organizations. This new status notwithstanding, the efficacious practice of collective bargaining still seems to be far-fetched. The precept in most public establishments for workers to participate in decision making through collective bargaining machinery has no cogent appeal to management in Nigeria public organizations. Management already has the final decision and only persuades the union or workers' representatives to accept its decision (Longe, 2014).

Constraints to Collective Bargaining Practice

In Nigeria, a number of impediments inhibited the effectiveness of the practice of collective bargaining. As pointed out by Bello and Kinge (2014) one of the major constraints that predisposed this anomalous situation is the government interventionist approach. Such interventionist measures include use of force or threat on workers during collective bargaining session, lack of seriousness to engage in collective bargaining process, proscription of trade
union, unilateral action of government and continuous issuance of circular on wages award without consultation with the labour representatives. Instead of allowing collective bargaining to thrive, government still pays lip service to its use by resorting to primacy of wage commission as a means of granting wage award which often has cosmic applicability in the public sector. This use of fiat in Nigeria public service is a mockery to collective bargaining and hence not in line with the International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions and standards (Ekwoaba, Ideh and Ojikutu, 2015).

Aside the overbearing antics of the government, (both past and present), the enactment of the Trade Union Amendment Act of 2005 has not totally encouraged freedom of association to operate within the orbit of labour legislation in Nigeria. The freedom of association principle is fully guaranteed under the Nigerian constitution but the Act forbids the formation of new industrial union, which is inhibitory of collective bargaining practice and contradictory of the freedom of Association principle as entrenched in the constitution of the country. The Trade Union Amendment Act of 2005 is viewed as unhealthy invention in industrial relations (Ndifon, Nwagbara and Odey, 2008). Also, the ILO monitoring reports have urged the Nigerian government to revisit its policy and to re-amend the Trade Union Act, 2005, with the sole object of democratizing trade union and collective bargaining process (Fajana and Shadare, 2012). Although, under the democratically elected government in the country, some visible gains of democracy have filtered into public sector establishments but not in terms of right to strike and parity of power which are the fulcrums of collective bargaining practice. From the perspective of the trade unions, without the right to strike, collective bargaining would be nothing but collective begging (Weiss, 2005). Disharmonious relations is also most likely to occur when management has a distinct power advantage over the workers' representatives in bargaining matters as presently being witnessed in Nigera's public sector organizations.

The essence of collective bargaining in a developing nation like Nigeria is the containment of industrial conflicts. However, the approach has lost some of its latitudes for manoeuvres as a result of weak structures in the Nigeria public sector establishments. In the words of Anyim, Elegbede and Gbajumo-Sheriff (2011) the collective bargaining mechanism is defiledly and poorly structured in Nigeria public organizations. As such, the existing bargaining structure arrangement in the public service is seen to be frail. Relatedly, unwillingness to negotiate in good faith and non-observance of the sanctity of collective agreement by management are part of the banes of collective bargaining practice in the public sector organizations of Nigeria. Generally, the effectiveness of collective bargaining often depends largely on how previous agreements were implemented. Akhaukwa, Maru and Byruhanga (2013) argued that collective bargaining process is thus expected to be fair and legal and should take place in an environment of trust for parties to achieve workable relationship. In contrast however, what obtains as reality in public sector organizations in Nigeria is the reverse. The collective bargaining approach is not only widely undiffused but also defective and deceptive. Government as the largest employer of labour has continuously reneged to fully implement the basic outcome of collective bargaining. For instance, Adibe (2009) reported that the federal government neglected, ignored, failed and refused to implement the 2009 FGN/ASUU agreement after more than two years of its signing. Thus, the government has abandoned the main tenet of industrial democracy that agreements freely entered into must be honoured.
This creeping web of governments’ intrigues has largely undermined collective bargaining practice in public sector organizations in Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the broad objective of the study and comprehensive review of the literature, the following hypotheses were formulated and tested.

\( H_01 \): There is no significant difference in the perception of collective bargaining as an accommodative device for conflict management between labour and management in public sector organization in Nigeria.

\( H_02 \): There is no significant relationship between collective bargaining and conflict management in public sector organizations in Nigeria.

Methods

Research Design, Population and Sampling Procedure

This study adopted a survey research design. The survey was conducted in six (6) purposively selected public sector organizations (Ministries, Agencies and Parastatals) at the Federal Capital City, Abuja. All the organizations have a chequered history of industrial conflicts within the past five years. The population of the study is 9,805 made up of both management and workers inclusive of union members. Using an appropriate statistical formula for sample selection, stratified random sampling was used to select 1,500 respondents from all the six organizations. The basic criteria for inclusion in the sample were job rank and length of service of 5 years and above. The employee registers of the selected organizations were used as the sampling frame.

Data Sources

Both primary and secondary data were used for the study. Primary data were collected with the use of questionnaire as the main research instrument. Out of the 1500 copies of questionnaire administered with the help of two trained research assistants, 1425 were retrieved and appropriately filled. This yields an overall response rate of 95%. The questionnaire was designed by the researcher following standard guidelines (Sekaran, 2003). A set of Likert scale was used to measure pertinent constructs in the questionnaire. The second data for the study were sourced from journals and newspaper publications.

Validity and Reliability

Well validation of the questionnaire was ensured through Test Re–Test method with 50 employees of a similar public sector organization. Using Cronbach alpha at 0.05 level, the reliability coefficient of the variables ranged for 0.796 to 0.872 reflecting appropriate adequacy and adjudging the questionnaire as valid and reliable.

Data Analysis

The data collected were coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage, mean and standard deviation). The two main hypotheses of the study were subjected to t–test statistical technique and Spearman correlation at 0.05 level of significance.
Results of Findings

Socio-Demographic Attributes

Findings on the socio-demographic attributes of the respondents showed that their mean age is 37.8 years with a standard deviation of 8.3 years. The gender of respondents revealed a disproportionate representation, where male accounted for 75.9% of the sampled population, while female respondents constituted 24.1%. This represents at least ratio 3:1 across the gender group skewed in favour of males. This finding is a reflection of the Nigerian public sector labour force structure which is male dominated as confirmed by previous study (Longe, 2014). In terms of educational background, all the respondents had formal education of not less than a National diploma, with majority, (43.7%) having first university degree. This was expected with the increasing emphasis being placed on possession of higher educational qualification in the contemporary Nigeria public service. The average organizational tenure of the respondents is 10.2 years with standard deviation of 6.4 years. These findings attested to the maturity, educational status and organizational tenure of the selected participants, majority of whom have had fairly long service years in the public service.

Perception of Respondents on Collective Bargaining as an Accommodative Device for Conflict Management

Data in Table I show the perception of respondents on collective bargaining as an accommodative device for conflict management in public sector organizations. The mean score values were derived from the Likert scale of numeric value 1 - 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree) with capable of achieving lasting industrial peace and harmony having the highest mean value of 4.04 which is higher than the standard mean response average of 2.5 at 5 point rating scale. From the analysis, a significant majority (87.5%) of the respondents agreed in strong and mild terms to this indicator. A negligible (2.1%) of the respondents strongly disagreed while only a few (9.8%) of the total sampled population disagreed and the rest (0.5%) of the respondents were indifferent. In addition, results showed that the standard deviation of opinion of respondents was .862 and skewness was .618 which showed that the opinion was dispersed to the higher side of the respondents. The value of the kurtosis of .654 which was platykurtic, supported the viewpoint of the respondents.

The respondents' perception adjudging collective bargaining as a potent strategy of institutionalizing and containing workplace conflict had mean value of 4.00 on the standard 5-point rating scale. The variation in opinion and skewness were .858 and .654 respectively. These findings depicted the opinions of respondents as scattered at the higher side. The calculated kurtosis (.614) indicated that the distribution of the opinion was platykurtic, suggesting that collective bargaining offered tremendous scope for labour and management in reconciling relational problems in work organizations. Also, worthy of note is that, an overwhelming majority (81.8%) agreed both in strong and mild terms that the mechanism is a device for reducing conflict escalation in organizations.

On the indicator that collective bargaining is useful for moderating the arbitrariness of both labour and management in work establishments, the mean score value (2.88) was slightly above average. Thus, it is evident from the data provided in Table I that seven (7) out of ten
(10), that is, (70%) of the respondents agreed in both strong and mild terms to this perceived indicator. The standard deviation and skewness were .945 and .735 respectively showing that the respondent's opinions were still tilted to the higher side. The calculated value of kurtosis (.544) was platykurtic, implying that collective bargaining served as a social invention for the promotion of stable working relationship in organizations.

More importantly, on the discernment of collective bargaining as a good prerequisite for industrial democracy and jurisprudence, the observed mean value of respondents was 4.01 and very high on the standard rating scale. The standard deviation and skewness were recorded at .863 and .658 respectively suggesting that the distribution of opinion of respondents was further scattered to the higher side. The calculated value of kurtosis .615 revealed that the distribution of opinion was platykurtic confirming that collective bargaining incubated civility and complaisance into work organizations. On the indicator that collective bargaining ensures free flow of communication in the workplace, more than two-thirds, that is (72%) of the respondents agreed in both mild and strong terms perceiving it as so. A negligible (6.7%) and small ample (13.3%) of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively. The rest (8.0%) were indifferent. Findings further revealed that the mean score value of the indicator was 3.16. The standard deviation and skewness were (.902) and (.742) respectively. The kurtosis (.548) established that the distribution of opinion was platykurtic rendering collective bargaining as a problem solving mechanism for both management and labour disputes on employment related issues in work-establishments.

Constraints inhibiting the competency of Collective Bargaining

Information were obtained from respondents on the stumbling constraints to collective bargaining practice in the public sector organizations. Data presented in Table 2 show the mean and standard deviation value analysis of the hindrances. Creeping web of intrigues of government had the highest mean score of 4.25 (sd=1.28), unfavourable political climate, m = 4.16 (sd=1.30), economic recession, m = 3.52 (sd=1.32), lack of respect for sanctity of collective agreement m=3.51 (sd = 1.32) and non-compliance with ILO standard and convention having the least mean score value of 3.00 and (sd=0.88). The picture which emerged from these findings portrayed collective bargaining as a corporate strategy for conflict management, but yet to be accorded the required sound footing in public sector establishments in Nigeria.
Table I: Perception of Respondents on Collective Bargaining as an Accommodative Device for Conflict Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>N=1425</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Indifferent</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceives as capable of achieving lasting industrial peace and harmony</td>
<td></td>
<td>67.5% (962)</td>
<td>20.0% (285)</td>
<td>0.5% (70)</td>
<td>9.8% (140)</td>
<td>2.1% (31)</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0.862</td>
<td>0.654</td>
<td>0.618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observes as potent strategy of institutionalizing and containing workplace conflict</td>
<td></td>
<td>59.8% (852)</td>
<td>21.2% (302)</td>
<td>3.0% (43)</td>
<td>10.3% (147)</td>
<td>5.7% (81)</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.858</td>
<td>0.656</td>
<td>0.614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful for moderating the arbitrariness of employers and employees</td>
<td></td>
<td>25% (356)</td>
<td>45% (641)</td>
<td>3.5% (50)</td>
<td>23.0% (328)</td>
<td>3.5% (43)</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>0.945</td>
<td>0.935</td>
<td>0.544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good prerequisite for industrial democracy and jurisprudence</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.0% (214)</td>
<td>67.0% (955)</td>
<td>7.0% (100)</td>
<td>8.0% (113)</td>
<td>3.0% (43)</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>0.863</td>
<td>0.658</td>
<td>0.615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensures free flow of communication in the workplace</td>
<td></td>
<td>32% (454)</td>
<td>40.0% (570)</td>
<td>8.0% (113)</td>
<td>13.3% (189)</td>
<td>6.7% (97)</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>0.902</td>
<td>0.742</td>
<td>0.548</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Mean Value and Standard Deviation of Constraints to Effectiveness of Collective Bargaining Practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>m</th>
<th>Sd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creeping web of intrigues of government</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1425</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfavourable political climate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1425</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic recession</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1425</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non - respect for sanctity of collective agreement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1425</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non compliance with ILO standard and conventions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1425</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assessment of the efficacy of Collective Bargaining as a Machinery for Conflict Management

On the respondents' opinion on the assessment of the effectiveness of collective bargaining as a pathway to conflict management, data in Table 3 show that a significant majority (63.3%) of the sample population affirmed that collective bargaining practice as a machinery for conflict management was ineffective and very ineffective (20.6%) in the public sector organizations. Only few (10.7%) of the respondents adjudged the machinery of collective bargaining as effective. These findings are indications that collective bargaining has seldom played any effectual role in labour relations issues in the public sector in Nigeria. Various reasons were adduced for the poor performance of the collective bargaining machinery by the respondents. While 43% of the respondents gave the ceaseless labour discontentment and incessant industrial actions, 13% of the respondents saw the bargaining structure as enfeebled and enervated, 12.6% described the process of collective bargaining to be undiffused and undemocratic in nature. Other deductions for the ineffectiveness were widening gulf of relationship between labour and management (11.2%), lack of parity of power on the negotiation table (10.1%) and government interventionist measures (10.1%).
Table 3: Assessment of the Efficacy of Collective Bargaining as a Machinery for Conflict Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How would you describe the effectiveness of collective bargaining as a pathway to conflict resolution</th>
<th>N = 1425</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very effective</td>
<td>3.8% (55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>10.7% (152)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineffective</td>
<td>63.3% (902)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very ineffective</td>
<td>20.6% (293)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>1.6% (23)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reasons Adduced**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>% (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ceaseless labour discontentment and incessant industrial actions</td>
<td>43.0% (614)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enfeebled and enervated bargaining structure</td>
<td>13.0% (185)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undemocratic and undiffused nature of collective bargaining process</td>
<td>12.6% (178)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widening gulf of relationship between labour and management</td>
<td>11.2% (160)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of parity of power on the negotiation table</td>
<td>10.1% (144)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government interventionist measures</td>
<td>10.1% (144)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Test of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis I**

In order to test this hypothesis, which held on the assumption that there is no significant difference in the perception of collective bargaining as an accommodative device for conflict management between labour and management, the mean and standard deviation responses were calculated for both the two groups and subjected to t - test statistical analysis. Data in Table 4 show the t - test summary on the study hypothesis. Thus, the t_{cal} value is higher than the critical t_{val} at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate hypothesis was accepted, denoting that there is significant difference in the perception of collective bargaining as an accommodative device for conflict management between labour and management in public sector organizations.
Table 4: Summary of t-test on the Difference in the Perception of Collective Bargaining as an Accommodative Device for Conflict Management between Labour and Management.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Sd</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>t_{cal.}</th>
<th>T_{critical value}</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>1068</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 2

Spearman correlation was used to test the hypothesis of the link between collective bargaining and conflict management. Data presented in Table 5 show that no significant statistically determinate effect was found between collective bargaining and conflict management in the public sector organization with the coefficient of 18.6% at significance level of 0.05. The result shows that the null hypothesis was accepted while the alternate hypothesis was rejected. Thus, a statistical significant relationship between collective bargaining and conflict management in Nigeria public sector organizations was not established.

Table 5: Matrix of Correlation between Collective Bargaining and Conflict Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collective Bargaining</th>
<th>Conflict Management</th>
<th>Variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.186**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** not significant at p>0.05

Discussion of Findings

This study contributes to the understanding of the link between collective bargaining and conflict management in public sector organizations in Nigeria. The results of the study offered a strong empirical support for collective bargaining as a process of adjustment or mutual accommodation between management and labour representatives in which compromise is an important ingredient. Relatedly, respondents in general had a perceived conception of the approach as a pre-eminent method of industrial rule-making and means of achieving equity and social justice in wage employment market, be it in public or private sector organizations. These findings were in harmony and mirrored the views of Anyim, Elegbede and Gbajumo Sheriff (2011) and Onah (2008) that to avoid workplace conflict, collective bargaining must be used in determining the working conditions and terms of employment between employers and workers’ representatives. By and large, findings further revealed that, respondents had perceived opinion of collective bargaining as an accommodative device tailored to institutionalize grievances and reduce the escalation of unproductive conflict to the barest minimum in work-organizations. It also provides opportunity for exchange of information to enhance understanding among the two
social partners (labour and management) thereby ensuring the basis for lasting industrial peace in work–organizations.

However, empirical evidence from the study amply confirmed that the quantitative impact of collective bargaining as a tool of conflict management in the Nigeria public sector organizations was non-effectual. This was buttressed by the assertion of Ibietan (2013) that the fairness and equity of collective bargaining as a machinery for redress and conflict resolution is suspect and questionable in the Nigerian public sector organizations. The manifest outcomes were the incessant intense cycle of industrial actions which have almost been turned into a daily routine, widening the gulf of relationship between management and labour in public sector establishments in the country. The result of the study further indicated that the collective bargaining approach in the public sector organizations vitiates the ideal and at variance with the procedural rule governing the mechanism as exhorted by Allan Flanders in his industrial relations model. This does not only undermine the relevance of collective bargaining in Nigeria public sector organization but has also made it antithetical to democratic values (Ekwoaba, Ideh and Ojikutu, 2015).

Review of literature identified constraints inhibitive of the competency of collective bargaining in the public sector establishment as government interventionist measures, poor bargaining structure and process, unfavourable political climate, economic recession, non-compliance with ILO standards and conventions and lack respect for sanctity of collective agreement. All these have affected the operation of collective bargaining in Nigeria especially in the public sector organizations (Adewole and Adebola, 2010). In semblance therefore, the results of this present study were consistent with previous studies and also reflected the findings of Shadare and Elegbede (2012) and Ibietan (2013) that government still pays lip service to the practice of collective bargaining in public sector organizations in Nigeria. Significantly, empirical evidence from this present study did confirm the creeping web of governments' intrigues as one of the basic stumbling blocks of effective collective bargaining practice in the public sector establishments in the country. In the words of Ibietan (2013), this does not guarantee the efficacy of collective bargaining as a solution to labour conflicts. As such, this constraint is a major affront on the efficaciousness of the mechanism as a pathway to conflict management. It has also arm-twisted collective bargaining machinery rendering it as ineffective in the process of conflict resolution in Nigerian public sector organizations.

More fundamentally, the salient findings of this study is that good faith bargaining is still lacking in Nigeria’s public sector organizations. Bargaining in good faith suggests effective negotiation in which two parties meet and confer when necessary with minds open to discussion and persuasion with a view to reaching agreement on new terms through compromise. Thus, the weight of evidence from this study clearly established that the collective bargaining process in the Nigerian public sector deviates from the ideal. As Ibietan (2013) put it, there is a narrow view of collective bargaining in consent and practice especially on the part of management. In practice, the study found collective bargaining approach to be ineffective and this has made the machinery not to play any significant role in conflict management in the Nigerian public sector organizations. Thus, government being the largest employer of organized labour in the country has impacted negatively on the practice of collective bargaining through its violations of good faith bargaining.
Conclusion and Recommendations

The study has confirmed that respondents in general have a perceived feelings of acceptance of collective bargaining as an important mechanism for managing conflicts related to terms of employment and working conditions in the Nigerian public sector organizations. It posits the overriding essence of collective bargaining as eschewing costly industrial conflicts and ensuring that compromises and agreements work for harmony to prevail in the working relationship between labour and management. The review of literature established collective bargaining as a rational process through which employers and employees attempt to reach cordial settlement that resolves a difference of preference. Thus, the device serves as a humanizing agent by restricting managerial prerogatives and unilateral actions exercised by management over their workers in labour related matters. Based on the findings of the study, it was revealed that collective bargaining has been relatively impotent in terms of performance suggesting practically its non-effectual status as a pathway to conflict management in Nigerian public sector organizations. So far, the cardinal adduced reasons from the data gathered in this study, amongst others, were the management reluctance to bargain in good faith and guileful posture of government to collective bargaining practice.

Furthermore, the study offers the following recommendations. Management in Nigeria public organizations must as a matter of necessity imbibe the democratic culture upon which the ideals of collective bargaining rest. Both management and labour as social partners should also increase their capacities for effective collective bargaining practice by showing willingness and expanding cooperation to bargain in good faith in order to find common ground and resolve conflicts amicably. All the three tiers of government in Nigeria (local, state and federal) as employers of labour should abide with the provision of ILO standard and convention which they subscribed to by rectifying their asymmetrical patterns of collective bargaining approach in the public sector organizations in the country. Effective collective bargaining bears reasonable level of stable relationship between labour and management and further ensures better corporate performance. Thus, government should stop paying lip service to the use of collective bargaining and the mechanism should be given better prominence in the determination of employment conditions in the Nigerian public sector organizations.

REFERENCES


