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## TOWARDS ADDRESSING EMPLOYMENT CASUALIZATION: UNEARTHING FACTORS LIMITING LABOR UNION STRUGGLE IN THE FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRY IN LAGOS

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### Abstract

Commenting on the significance of work as a pathway for the realization of human needs, evidence has shown the challenges of non-standard employment (NSW) on the actualization of human needs on many grounds. However, this study attempts to stretch this discourse beyond the realm of other industrial sectors in Nigeria to the food processing industrial sector with sparse documentations. The paper interrogates how the labor union has been hampered by a constellation of issues towards addressing the rife of employment casualization. In view of this, the labor market segmentation theory was positioned as a theoretical argument to understand the array of these issues. A total of 24 labor union leaders were purposively selected from three organizations in the food processing industry based on some pre-determined criteria. The NVivo qualitative software was employed to identify themes from the transcripts' data, while the content analysis tool was used to analyze the themes. The study found a range of workplace challenges for casual laborers and the labor union with consequential impact on the membership and financial strength of the union. The lack of political will and patriotism, economic downturn, rivalry and corruption were highlighted as issues constraining labor union efforts in the realization of decent work places. The study recommends a more habitual political climate for labor union through appropriate legislation for a robust function as well as the need to address the rife of rivalry and corruption among rank-and-file labor leaders for a workable labor union agenda for decent work.

**Keywords:** Employment Casualization, Labor Union, Food Processing Industry, Nigeria

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### 1. Introduction

The global purpose of work is tied to the need to promote an ever-improving and viable economic growth of any nation (Di Ruggiero *et al.* 2015), where the working class can be

assured of the realization of basic needs and the advancement of social development. For the case of Nigeria, the necessity to instigate sustained and gratifying types of work is greatly connected to ensuring a systemic attempt in decreasing the ascending rate of poverty, unemployment, diseases and other pointers reflecting hindrances to her development. The ongoing economic restructuring has continued to engender different alterations in the operations and peculiarities of global labor market (Kifle and Desta, 2017). In Nigeria, this has swiftly reorganized the operations of the labor market from the customary long-standing outlook of traditional employment to the new form of work christened employment casualization (Fapohunda, 2012). Without doubt, the new form of work has conveyed challenging work conditions with increases in poverty and diseases among the working people (Lewchuk *et al.* 2016). In Nigeria, the utility of this work pattern in many foreign and indigenous organizations explains employers' justifications, including work restructuring, cost cutting strategy and the acquisition of specified human capital skills (Jawando and Adenugba, 2014).

Associated with employment casualization, there are numerous work dares such as harmful and dreadful work situations with high risks of exposure to industrial accidents in the workplace, consistent and unjustified workplace retrenchment without due process, proscription from pension and having to work in a stress-induced environment with consequences for physical, psychological and mental puzzles (Forde and Slater, 2016). While these challenges could differ with respect to the efficacy of country's specific labor laws and labor market functions, the Nigeria situation, however, resonates with these dilemmas specifically with her weak laws enacted for the regulation of work (Fapohunda, 2012). One of the main contested arguments that has roused commentaries in the body of literature is the proscription of the fundamental right of association (Ajonbadi, 2015) depicting a clear violation of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria<sup>1</sup>. This paradox is well suited with the Nigerian labor union. To be sure, the Nigerian labor union has suffered immense setbacks with the growing influence of employment casualization, largely in terms of relevance and membership loss (Igwe, 2013).

The Nigerian labor union being a union ratified by International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions and treaties has long been on the part of resuscitating the meaning of work through combatant approaches. However, some of the significant attempts dated many formative roles played during many years of military dictatorship, especially the Late General Sanni Abacha<sup>2</sup>. Globally, many of the labor union exertions in the pursuit of decent work places have been affected by a range of factors. For instance, the advent of the world economic order in which the forte of the capital has been reinforced terrifically, constitutes a threat to the vociferous influence of the labor union (Behbe and Mahapa, 2014). Therefore, the relentless efforts of the capitalist state to destabilize the unity of the labor union through political manipulations in order to emasculate their innate strength in questioning capitalist exploitation has remained a long standing constraint (Anyim, 2014). Importantly, the increasing incidences of rivalry, divisiveness and corruption among rank- and file labor union have also not helped in this instance (Atitola, 2014; Behbe and Mahapa, 2014).

The literature is brimmed with discussions on the challenges of employment casualization in Nigeria, though with different focuses distinctive from the emphasis of this study (Jawando and Adenugba, 2014; Akinwale, 2014; Ajonbadi, 2015). Extant literature also shows the responsiveness of the labor union to employment casualization (Adewumi, 2019; Fayankinnu, 2015). However, scarce attention is paid to the constellation of issues constraining labor union efforts in the pursuit of decent work in Nigeria, especially the food processing industry. Therefore, this study advances the claim that understanding these concerns could enjoy a symbolic and perhaps fundamental pathway towards identifying solutions to the continued work degradation in the food processing industry, and Nigeria at large. In view of this, the main crux of the study is to first dissect and comprehend the conundrums of employment

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<sup>1</sup> Section 40(8) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 2011 as amended shows that every person shall have the right to assemble freely and associate with other persons, and in particular, he may form or belong to any political party, trade union or any other association for the protection of his interest

<sup>2</sup> The Late General Sanni Abacha came into power 17 November 1993 and died as a sitting Head of State 8 June 1998.

casualization for a holistic understanding of the myriads of bottlenecks incapacitating the labor union in this regard.

The main contribution of this paper is therefore the questioning of the array of issues limiting the strategic efforts of the labor union in the pursuit of decent workplace. By interrogating this discourse, it is probable to engender a fresh and nuanced understanding of how the labor union can be reinvigorated for the attainment of decent work. The analysis takes the niche that the labor union is strategically positioned to improve the conditions of work through its unfettered strength, and this is distinctively relevant for understanding the implications of work degradation as well as the desire for decent workplace as advanced by the apex labor body.

After a succinct explanation of the challenges inherent in employment casualization, the study shifts to a discussion on labor union constraints. This clearly exposes the sparse limited literature on the constellation of issues constraining the labor union exertions in addressing employment casualization. We then turn to offer a discussion on Labor Market Segmentation Theory (LMS) to foreground a theoretical leaning for the study. We proceed to give an account of the different methods and methodology employed in data collection and analysis. In what follows, we present a detailed analysis of the different themes that emerged from the data. The study concludes with a need for a serious policy framework through legislation for addressing the challenges of casualization.

## **2. Employment casualization conundrums: An unfolding debate**

The evolving global trend has ushered in exponential development the world over with significant impact on the operations of labor markets conveying varied work arrangements with debilitating challenges for the working class and the labor union (Gallie *et al.* 2016). For instance, research has shown the work conditions of non-standard work (NSW) as enabler of diseases, workplace accidents and other psychological challenges (McGann *et al.* 2016). Casualization work practices are typically characterized by excessive stress such that requires extra physical and mental exertion than standard employment types. The consequences of excessive work stress have engendered an unpleasant effect on the mental and physical wellness of workers in this work category (Atitola, 2014). The abridged terms of work peculiar with casualization also provoke many strands of challenges. For instance, the puzzle of job insecurity where the job of casual workers is terminated abruptly without due process has increased the bane of unemployment in the country (Fapohunda, 2012). Although the Nigerian Labor Act<sup>3</sup> expressly sets out modalities for the termination of work, the unapologetic violation of this provision explains the feebleness of the Nigerian labor laws for the protection of workers' rights. Crucially, the necessity to restructure the workforce is entirely the remit of organizations. However, this responsibility has been severely abused by Nigerian organizations with the influx of more of casual workers and fewer standard work practices as an explanation of organizational restructuring (Jawando and Adenugba, 2014).

The concerns of poor quality of work, denial of training opportunities, absence of career path and the proscription of the individual fundamental rights to association are associated challenges of NSW (Lair, 2012). Particularly, occupational hazards have been linked to casualization. For instance, the work settings of casual workers are characterized by an unhealthy work milieu and industrial safety gadgets are often not provided in the event of industrial accidents. These evidences capture many of the challenges of being a casual worker, especially in multinational production companies seated in Nigeria, where there have been cases of fatal industrial accidents without compensation (Igwe, 2013). These challenges among others represent a debilitating experience for an average Nigerian worker in the NSE category.

The labor union in this epoch of advanced capitalist societies faces severe challenges. One of the chief challenges is concerned with the evolution and increase growth in the utility of casual laborers. In other words, the present era can be described as a period of trade union disempowerment due largely to the ascending informalization of work in both the industrial and

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<sup>3</sup> See section 7(1) of the Labour Act of 1974.

services sectors. In terms of organizing difficulties, the fast spread of casualization has resulted in the separation of the workforce into two distinct types; the standard employment workforce with associated work benefits and the non-standard employment workforce with debilitating work conditions. According to Finlayson and Palmvang (2016), this classification with the mammoth of the working people concentrated in the non-standard work category has made strategic organizing a difficult adventure for the labor union. Without a doubt, the forte of the labor union is gradually dwindling such that the capacity to protect the economic interest of the working class has been subdued with the flourish of atypical work (Di Ruggiero *et al.* 2015). Again, this narrative exemplified the Nigerian case where the labor union leaders have been made incapable to render work protection to the Nigerian working class.

### 3. Contextualizing labor union constraints

The world over, the activities of labor unions are usually constrained by a range of factors in the discharge of its statutory duties. Studies have exuded the impact of recession on the responsive measures of labor union in addressing the rising influence of employment casualization across major economies (Behbe and Mahapa, 2014; Adefolaju, 2013). For instance, the bargaining power of the Nigerian labor union as a survival response to anti-labor policies has encumbered severe declines in the period characterized by economic recession (Anyim *et al.* 2011). Evidence has also shown that as the wave of economic recession becomes more severe, the labor union movement seems to prioritize their demands by limiting focus to sustaining the jobs of rank and file members, rather than the economic improvement of NSW (Solaja, 2015). In addition, the financial strength of union has been affected by economic recession limiting the enhancement of labor union human capital skills and capacity, a strategic measure needed to address unceasing rise of employment casualization (Stirling, 2013).

The context of the political environment where labor unions operate explains an important criterion for the effectiveness of its activities and programs. In most African countries, the political environment has remained a major constraint inhibiting labor union strategic efforts in the defense of work exploitation (Adefolaju, 2013). For instance, in Nigeria, many of the labor union protests and agitations for decent work have been stalled by the 'militarized' political environment with the intent of suppressing the strength and clout of the union. In other words, it could be said that the arrangement of Nigeria's employment relations appears more to the clemency of employers with evidence of gross exploitation across industrial and service sectors (Anyim, 2014). For instance, the political instrument has been used to proscribe industrial strikes in Nigeria as contained in section 31(6) of the Trade Union Act of 2005 as amended. The argument put forward in this paper conceives the proscription of industrial strike as a measure to further strengthen employers for continued exploitation of the working class, while labor union relevance continued to abate within the broad society. Similarly, the Nigerian labor court empowered with the responsibility of making legal pronouncement has been hijacked by political influence, thereby making the Nigeria employment relations non-conducive for labor agitations (Igwe, 2013; Onyeonoru, 2004). While politics and trade union activities are no doubt inseparable, as most of the governmental policies and laws are influenced by the labor union, the influx of trade unionists into politics has engendered a great setback for labor union mobilizing and organizing efforts (Jawando, 2009). Relatedly, the Nigerian case neatly buttresses this argument where labor leaders have become government *tooth dogs* with a shift from the primary objective of promoting decent work in the workplace.

The problems of internal democracy and corruption without doubt are some of the major factors affecting the realization of trade union objectives. In Nigeria, there is evidence between internal democracy puzzle and the realization of labor union economic functions to its constituents (Adewumi, 2007). The importance of democratic values as a canon for effective labor union function cannot be over-emphasized because the goal of ensuring decent work devoid of employers' exploitative penchants is no doubt firmly rooted in the ethos of democracy (Rajesh and Manoj, 2014). Crucially, the snag of rivalry among the rank-and-file of labor union has hindered the collective objective of decent work in many instances (Garnero *et al.* 2013). The desire for fame and power among the rank-and-file labor leaders has engendered rivalry,

which is endangering labor union decent work agenda pursuit. Firmed with this position, the Nigeria labor union has consistently been described as a movement lacking the required strength and knowledge to upturn the working conditions of the working class (Fayankinu, 2015). The argument then becomes how can the labor union utilize a persistent force against the tide of employment casualization if internal grapple has hijacked its core economic responsibility to the working class? This important question represents one of the arguments raised in this study.

#### **4. Labor market segmentation (LMS): Theoretical insights**

The theoretical proposition of this article is the need to cogitate the discourse of employment casualization, beyond the narrow realm of the challenges it posits to workers and the labor union to a deeper analysis of how labor union exertions towards work degradation have been constrained. Therefore, by bringing on board this nuanced discussion, a fresh perspective can be engendered on how the changing trend of work in Nigeria can be addressed. The core of the LMS theory explains that there are dissimilar and non-competing assemblages in the labor market with differences not predicated on skills and education, but more closely determined by institutional factors (Garz, 2013). In other words, these factors have engendered discrimination between the primary and secondary sector workers, respectively (Garz, 2013). According to Jakstiene (2010), the primary sector includes work of suitable and secured conditions, freedom of association and career progression on the one hand. On the other, the secondary sector is infused with indiscreet jobs, poor work conditions and reward systems, non-existent opportunities for career progression and low requirement necessities (Gazier and Petit, 2007).

The disparity between the employment conditions of workers in these work sectors has continued to provoke contentious debate between the neo-classical economy and LMS theorists. For instance, apologists of the neo-classical theory explain that the drive of an organization to remain competitive and maximize profits is roused by the need to align workers' reward and human capital skills (Fajana, 2008). In other words, the variance in the reward of two sets of workers performing similar job functions clearly captures the differences in their human capital skills. However, the contention from the perspective of the proponents of the LMS theory is cannoned by the assumption that discrepancy in the reward of two productive workers explains labor discrimination. This argument is advanced from the standpoint that issues of labor market polices and job discrimination do not support skills and human capital possession, but more based on the nature, contents and characteristics of available jobs (Haririan *et al.* 2009; Fajana, 2008).

Therefore, these arguments mirrored many of the dares of secondary labor market workers. For example, the employment conditions of casualization suitably define the features of the secondary labor markets such as denial of the right to association, poor wages and lack of social protection, among others (Polavieja, 2003). To be sure, institutional barriers have limited the entrance of the secondary labor market workers into the more secure primary labor market. In other words, the growing influence of economic, political and social barriers has constrained labor union roles in the realization of decent work, especially with the confinement casual workers into the secondary labor market who form the outsized number of the working people in Nigeria (Fapohunda, 2012; Jawando and Adenugba, 2014). Taking this into account, the paper attempts to explain how the restriction of workers to the secondary labor market has greatly hampered the roles and efforts of the labor union to garner strength from the constituents of the working people. As the axiom goes, "the strength of the labor union is predicated on its numbers". With this axiom in mind, it is reasonable enough to argue that the power of the labor union to address the spate of casualization becomes questionable when in fact its large army of supposed members has been limited to the secondary labor market by institutional barriers. Therefore, the LMS theory is reviewed in this paper to understand the challenges of casual workers (secondary workers) on the one hand, and how the splitting of the labor market into primary and secondary labor market sectors has cramped trade union strategic efforts towards the realization of decent work.

## 5. Methodology

The qualitative research method was employed with sample stretch from three organizations in the Nigerian food processing industry. The study employed the exploratory research design type as a basis to advance the frontier of knowledge on factors hamstringing trade union struggles for the realization of decent work (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016; Saunders *et al.* 2009). A total of 24 labor leaders were deliberately selected in the proportion of eight from each of the sampled organizations. The chief criteria employed in the recruitment of samples include having been a union leader with at least 10 years of experience in addition to understanding of labor union roles in the realization of decent work and the array of issues thwarting these strategic roles. In other words, the purposive sampling technique was utilized in the recruitment of labor union leaders with the intent that only union leaders with the prerequisite knowledge on the subject of discussion were selected for this study.

The population of study represents union leaders from different departments of the organizations, including the human resource, legal, production and corporate social responsibilities departments. The justification for the selection of samples across these departments was to engender an in-depth discourse from varying labor union perspectives. The semi-structured interview approach was employed to give room for the uncovering of complementary questions in order to effectively address the research aim (Yin, 2016). The interview procedure followed the use of an interview guide containing the lists of questions posed to respondents in order to maintain an orderly sequence in the drifts of interrogation as the interview unfolds. Data collection began with the permission of the leadership of the union.

The interviews were conducted on a personal note with each interview recorded with a voice digital recorder and lasting between 50 and 60 minutes. The data collection lasted for five months (between June - October, 2019) because of the demanding schedule of the labor union leaders. The data generated were analyzed with the NVivo (ver. 11) qualitative software. However, it is important to state that the application of the NVivo qualitative software was to help in the identification of themes and sub-themes from the vast transcribe of data. In other words, the qualitative content analysis was employed to make sense of the data in the order at which they address the research aim. Regarding ethics, each labor union was represented with a consent note before the interview to indicate their willingness to participate in the study or otherwise. In addition, findings reported in this study complied with utmost research ethics by only reporting the views and opinions of the respondents with strict protection given to all respondents.

## 6. Results and analysis

The main themes that emerged from the data were analyzed as related to different component of the study. The main themes include the experiences and problems of employment casualization for works and the labor union. Others are the concern of political and economic constraints, and the issue of rivalry, lack of patriotism and corruption. These themes are constructively analyzed and discussed in the ensuing sub-headings.

### 6.1. Experiences and problems inherent in employment casualization

A number of workplace dares were uncovered for workers in the NSW arrangement by labor union leaders. The constellation of challenges reported include but not limited to the proscription of the human right of association, poor and unhealthy work conditions, poor pay without social benefits, denial to access amenities such as medical and canteen services, and refusal for compensation in the instance of industrial hazard. These descriptions signpost a typified case of poverty according to majority of the respondents. It was also reported that many casual workers are dismissed abruptly without consideration to employment laws. The labor leaders further reiterate that the conditions of work in NSW are by no means improving as several efforts to ensure they are organized have been hindered by many bottlenecks. One of the respondents clearly expresses his opinion as follows:

What should we even expect from people that are treated unfairly in an employment situation? For the case of casual workers, they have too much of problem to bear. These people are not even considered for health and medical allowance should in case they encounter any accident in the workplace. Majority of them cannot afford good working life for themselves as result of the meagre pay. But you will still find out that the employment situation of the country has made many accept this kind of dreadful work.

Another sentiment was shared by respondents with regard to the violation of the human right of casual workers not to either form or join a trade union association. This position was argued by the majority of the respondents that while it is clear that the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and other extant labor laws do not give recognition for the denial of the freedom of association, it is not clear why casual workers are proscribed from this fundamental human right. To buttress this view point, one of the respondents explained:

One of the problem I know about this group of workers is that they do not have voice. The nature of their employment has silenced their human right and they are not allowed to form association or join any. I am aware that the different laws and even the Constitution does not support this, but you find out that employers are enjoying too much of federal immunity for exploiting Nigerian workers. So as far as what we have in terms of labor laws are still in existence, I do not think the work conditions of these workers will change anytime soon.

The ascending practice of employment casualization has no doubt provoked survival challenges for the labor union in terms of relevance and growth. For instance, before the emergence of globalization, the labor union movement was considered as a movement with strong attributes to the advantage of the working class. As the influence of globalization continues to escalate, workers are now being hired on casual employment terms and proscribed from trade union activities. Studies have shown the nexus between employment casualization practices and labor union membership strength (Finlayson and Palmvang, 2016; Atitola, 2014). Importantly, the largest constituent of the labor union leaders interviewed expresses great concerns on how work informalization has invaded the influence and strength of the labor union. For instance, one of the labor union leaders interviewed restates this concern as follows:

In a situation where people are not allowed to unionize based on some nomenclature which are not supported by labor laws, how do you expect our member to grow? Sincerely, we are in a difficult situation in this country. I said this because the more trade union membership is declining, the greater the chances that work will in no time lose its meaning and the labor union will entirely be faced out because of this new exploitative work arrangement.

Another labor union leader lent his opinion to the dare effect of casualization on union growth. However, it was particularly expressed that while the labor union is making frantic efforts to resuscitate the meaning of work, the Ministry of Labor and Employment and other government agencies have a role to play in this regard. As it is in Nigeria, the spate of outsourcing firms in Nigeria's labor market is relishing legal support from the Ministry of Labor and Employment. In view of this, the appropriate question should be a focus on the genuine role of the ministry in sanitizing the Nigeria labor market from capitalist exploitation. The labor union leader reported in the ensuing line:

Employment casualization has come to stay and the labor union is at the receiving end. It is in the interest of the union to concoct a way out of this by forming an alliance with the Ministry of Labor and Employment in order to legislate policies towards giving rights to the unionization of casual workers. The main reason why casual workers are

proscribed from the constitutional right of association is mainly on the refusal of the ministry to exert force and policy on these outsourcing firms.

As explained by respondents, under NSW arrangement, workers are paid based on wages without other workplace benefits as applicable to other constituents of the working class. In addition, it was also revealed that the conundrum of the work reorganization has constrained the effective function of the labor union in no small measure, especially with regard to improving the economic conditions of the working people. Clearly, these analyses corroborate existing literature on the fast diminishing relevance of the labor union within the broader society. According to the respondents, this relevance must not be left to fade away. Therefore, the way out for the labor union is to be strategic in its approach towards dealing with work exploitation capable of rendering the labor movement feeble.

## **6.2. Issues affecting labor union struggle in addressing employment casualization**

Existing studies present incomplete debates on the discourse of employment casualization with a limited focus on trade union response, while neglecting the important analysis of factors constraining labor union in redressing work degradation. Broadly, the issues arising from the examination of these factors reveal that the Nigerian Ministry of Labor and Employment represents a symbolic hindrance to achieving decent work in Nigeria. For instance, the poor monitoring and evaluation of outsourcing firms for checks are important indicators dwindling labor union struggles. The ensuing analysis exudes evidence assembled from empirical sources suggesting that the labor unions of the Nigerian food processing industry have been limited by five distinct factors in its bid to ensuring the sustained relevance of work.

### **6.2.1. Political constraints**

The majority of the labor union leaders interviewed express that the lack of political will to check the exploitative inclination of investors and employers of labor are important push factors promoting the widespread of employment casualization. It was revealed that the Nigerian lawmakers saddled with the legislation of laws to upturn the economic interests of Nigerians are seen promoting the interest of investors and employers of labor against the interest of the Nigerian working class. It was further explained that the political will to legislate sanctions for the revitalization of the Nigerian labor market from the flourish of atypical employment are weak and the continuous rebuke of the labor union efforts by the Nigerian lawmakers in the wrestle against anti-labor policies is in no small measure limiting labor union struggles. In view of this, it can be advanced that the political will for instituting a safety net for the protection of the working class has been hijacked by the Nigerian lawmakers for self-aggrandizement. One of the union leader's recounts in the following lines:

In Nigeria, the political-will to address employment casualization is dead. The Nigerian lawmakers are not even interested in seeing to how people can have a meaningful work life. In one of the meeting will had with the Senate committee on labor, they told us that we are too problematic for disturbing investors with too much of labor laws. Now, these are our own Senators that should be for the interest of Nigerians. So with this kind of political atmosphere in Nigeria, it is difficult for the labor union efforts to flourish.

Another respondent explains that among the conundrum of political will is a lack of governmental policy and implementation in the areas of supervising the activities of outsourcing companies such that would boost labor union strategic efforts towards the realization of decent work. This perspective is narrated below:

I will look at this political-will from the angle of government. The government needs to be committed to do more in the area of policy implementation that will engender a



more productive environment for the labor union operate. We are discussing casualization and it is clear that it is still this same government that issue out license to outsourcing firms without supervising their activities. So the government has not been helpful in this regard and this is greatly affecting the efforts of the labor union at the long run.

The contents of Nigeria's labor law no doubt have become so outdated that the different provisions contained therein do not dovetail with international best practices. Major provisions in these laws do not coincide with existing economic realities in Nigeria. The majority of respondents interviewed for this study, however, argued that employers of labor are taking advantage of the different loopholes in this law to exploit the working class through different work arrangements. It was also narrated that the lacuna in the labor law is also connected with the ambiguous roles of the Ministry of Labor and Employment and other labor departments in ensuring a safe and decent workplace. In view of this, the strategic efforts of the labor union towards sanitizing the workplace have greatly been affected with abstruse labor laws. One of the respondents explains below:

In Nigeria, nobody is following the provision of the law, even those that are supposed to ensure strict compliance to the law are not leaving up to expectation. Let me give you an instance, in a factory they are supposed to be factory inspection directorate, but that department is dead in Nigeria's ministry of Labor and Employment. So how can the union record any success in the wrestle against labor exploitation when, in fact, the laws guiding labor are not clear and the ministry responsible for our labor market are not leaving up to their assigned responsibility?

### **6.2.2. Economic factor**

Economic constraint was equally explained as a factor propelling the continued practice of employment casualization. Particularly, it was narrated that economic downturn has affected the individual job seeker to accept any job offer without evaluating its conditions, especially for survival. Many victims of casualization in the Nigerian food processing industry were described as job seekers who could not seek standard employment. It was gathered that advances in economic globalization have increased the frontiers of labor exploitation with fewer restrictions for employers to thrive while the private sectors are now more empowered than ever. The argument from this analysis is the freedom attached to private business ownership that has promulgated casualization work practices due to weak institutional enforcement policies. The labor unions, in turn, are now left with the option of addressing the ascending rate of unemployment or wrestle against employers' utility of casual labor. This is explicitly captured below:

We understand that employment casualization is fast spreading, but when one considers the economic situation of the country where the high rate of unemployment is increasing proportionately, you will see that the labor union is in a parlous stance. For instance, as a labor body we are concern about how at least people will become employed in order to take care of their family. So when you say people must not take up casual work, how do we help them achieve sustenance for themselves and family? So you can see that the union is in indeed in a challenging situation as a result of the effect of economic recession.

Another respondent, one of the labor union leaders in one of the sampled organizations, reported as follows:

Outside economic globalization, everybody seems to be complaining about the economic situation of the country, and in a bid to survive, they feel they have no other option than to take up any job. So with this, you can see that the economic situation

of the country is in itself encouraging casualization. So the labor union is limited to really do much in this regard.

### **6.2.3. Rivalry, lack of patriotism and corruption**

The lack of a high sense of patriotism among the labor unions needs to be urgently addressed. Working for the collective gains of the working class should be the most imperative venture of any union. This position was re-echoed that labor unions in recent times have been divided as a result of members becoming apolitical, while the economic importance of the working class is grossly ignored. Similarly, the majority of respondents explain that of the chief factors limiting trade union response to employment casualization are not unconnected from the puzzle of rivalry among rank-and-file labor union leaders. This opinion is shared by one of the respondents:

What we are having is a situation where people just want to assume union leadership and make name for them. When the union goes for meeting with representatives of the government, you observe that they will come back with a divided house. How can a divided union effectively address the concerns of workers or that which is affecting membership of the labor union? I mean how can there be any cohesion towards solving many problems of the workplace if the union itself is divided.

The menace of corruption was also reported by the majority of the respondents as one of the factors constraining labor union efforts. For instance, the problem of corruption among the labor union movement in Nigeria has long been argued as major concern for trade union growth. In this analysis, corruption is not limited to the embezzlement of union funds, but includes instances of electoral fraud in the contest for leadership offices. An explicit case in Nigeria was demonstrated in the 2015 elections when Nigeria Labor Congress (NLC) split into two. This position is further explained by a female labor union leader in the following lines:

As a labor union movement, there is no way we can function effectively, especially with respect to addressing the high spate of precarious work if we look away from the problem of corruption. As you are aware that corruption remains one of the factors affecting Nigeria's developmental objectives, so also is the experience among the labor union. This needs to be addressed for any struggle to be taken seriously.

The above submissions describe many of the problems fettering labor union strategic roles in the attainment of decent work as promulgated by the ILO. As highlighted, the concern of economic recession has further expanded the volatility of job seekers for employment casualization leaving trade union efforts to stifle. Similarly, respondents recounted the lack of political will from the Nigerian lawmakers to legislate appropriate laws to strengthen the labor union. Important to this discussion was the bane of rivalry and lack of patriotism among rank-and-file trade unions to form a formidable force against labor exploitation. Majority of the respondents averred that the responsibility of protecting the interest of the working class is now being prioritized for self-fulfillment on the part of labor leaders. Other concerns include the puzzle of corruption in the operations of the labor union. In specific terms, the labor union interviewed unanimously agreed that the incidence of corruption has no doubt thwarted the objectives of the labor movement such that the activities of the union have become weakened for protecting workers' interest.

## **7. Conclusion**

As this paper shows, the working class and the labor union have been greatly affected in terms of work conditions on the one hand, and growth-related implications on the other. For instance,

findings revealed poor working conditions, proscription from the fundamental right of association, poor work pay, and exclusion from major work benefits such as pension and medical allowances. Other important findings include additional workload, job insecurity and other physical and physiological pains arising from unregulated work schedule. In addition, there is little or no evidence for industrial democracy as casual workers received restricted supports from management and other permanent employees. A number of existing studies have found out that the levels of stress that characterized NSW are predictors of poor well-being, unpropitious traits and unwelcome attitude among workers in the NSW category (Akinwale, 2014; Kifle and Desta, 2017). The study reveals that the levels of labor union growth and membership strength have been greatly altered in the food processing industry of Nigeria with the rising influence of casualization. This research finding supports existing studies (Finlayson and Palmvang, 2016; Igwe, 2013).

The study also established lack of political will, economic constraints, rivalry and corruption as major banes constraining labor union efforts against employment casualization. The important factor of political will was evidenced in the lack of effective monitoring and enforcement functions in checking the immoderations of outsourcing firms, and by extension the attitude of Nigerian lawmakers towards ensuring decent workplace represent major setbacks for the labor union. Findings show that the consistent turbulent economic situations in Nigeria have dwindled labor union strength, while evidences of rivalry and corruption among rank-and-file labor union were also signposted as crucial factors affecting labor union strategic efforts. However, for a more robust labor union influence in achieving decent work, the study recommends that the Nigerian lawmakers should come to terms with the fact that serious and extensive policy framework is required through legislation for a strong labor union resolve to challenge the growing tide of exploitation. The labor union must also address the snag of corruption and rivalry for a stout resolve to improve conditions of work and the abating the strength of the union. The implication is the call for redefined labor union policy and strategic approaches for decent work place devoid of work exploitation through casualization work practices in a way that will take cognizance and address the myriads of issues hampering labor union efforts. In this regard, the labor union is recognized as not only a representative of the working class, but one possessing both economic and political clout required for influencing policies. Overall, the study makes the case that the labor union is uniquely relevant with the possession of these attributes for addressing the factors propelling the rising influence of employment casualization and its inherent challenges for the working class and the world of work in general.

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