

# Collective Bargaining and Its Awareness Among from Imo State Civil Servants, Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

Collective bargaining is an instrument use for conflict resolutions in any corporate organization. Its principal function is ensuring industrial peace especially in an organization that witness regular industrial crisis. The primary aim of this study is to examine factors affecting awareness of collective bargaining in Nigeria. It made use of descriptive survey design. The population was made up of all the workers in Imo state civil with a total population of 11200 and sample of 528 was selected using Blowers proportion allocation method (1967). The findings of this study show that awareness of collective was slightly poor due to many factors that were attributed to the government and union. There is a generally perceived relationship between awareness of collective bargaining and organizational stability. More so, collective bargaining characterised by good faith is still lacking in Nigerias' public sector organizations. The study culminated with some recommendations among which is 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. Also the union must promote inclusiveness and interval democracy in order to endear themselves more to workers.

**Keywords:** Awareness, civil servants, public service, collective bargaining

## INTRODUCTION

Collective bargaining and its awareness has constituted an unremitting daring factor to industrial peace across African and some Asian countries until the present time. The issue of employers and employees incompatible relationship has recurrently manifest in many organisations in Nigeria which has unfavourably affected productivity and social development.

The utilization of collective bargaining in Nigeria is deemed very poor due to lack of awareness of its principles and capacity requisite for its application. Inadequate knowledge of the phenomenon has unabatedly undermine good industrial relations environment as industrial crisis continued to rare their ugly heads in many organizations until the present day. There are no signs of improvement as deteriorating state of labour-management antagonistic relationship continued to be a challenge. Uvieghara (2000) and Danesi (2011), noted that poor labour policy; weak/obsolete labour legislation and inadequate knowledge of employment rights as major factors affecting harmonious industrial relations in Nigeria. These factors may also affect the awareness of collective bargaining and its fruitful utilization, beyond the above is the realisation that collective bargaining can only be effective when the parties in industrial relations system especially labour are aware of its uses; requirements and capacity needed for its fruitful utilization. Therefore, the goal of this study is to investigate the extent to which public servants are aware of collective bargaining as an industrial relations tool and how such awareness has affected its utilization.

Collective negotiations and consultations by the parties in Nigeria industrial relations as well as knowledge and awareness of the intricacies of collective bargaining are imperative in forestalling organizational conflicts. Alabi & Okeke (2023) found that most ministries in Nigeria (both federal and state) do not have collective bargaining machinery or at best poorly structured where it exists, hence workers preference for strikes at the onset of any

disagreement with the employers. Poor awareness of collective bargaining in the public sector is clearly evident in labours' initial choice of strike in several matters instead of strike as the weapon of last resort (Okene, 2010).

Public institutions in Nigeria are prone to incessant industrial conflict due to precarious nature of employer-employee relationship. Although conflict is inevitable in industrial relationship but the manner for which it is handled may resolve or make peaceful industrial atmosphere. There is no doubt that industrial conflict is an established fact of industrial relations. Fajana (2009) opined that conflict is endemic in every human organization. However, the intensity of conflict may vary from one organization to another and from one economy to the other.

It has been observed that labour unions and managers only remember collective bargaining when other means of conflict resolution prove abortive, in this case collective bargaining is considered as the last resort in conflict resolution. This case may be mostly associated with Imo state civil service where strike comes up initially on several matters instead of collective bargaining. The situation described above is apparently the case in public institutions where protests, demonstrations, riots and industrial actions are apparently wrongly viewed as tools of industrial relations rather than being viewed as antithetical to institutional values (Okeke, 2018). This is a pointer to the fact that either the practice is flawed or there may be lack of awareness between the parties. The situation is further compounded/aggravated by the wind of economic change, recession and inflation that is blowing across the country which is detrimental to average Nigerians, especially public servants. Therefore, lack of industrial peace in Nigeria can be apparently seen as a work of awareness factor, failure to bargain and unsuccessful bargaining. This development is not healthy as it destroys the desired growth and development within the system. Secondly, it hinders Nigeria's quest for foreign investment. The International Labour Organization (ILO) (2012) maintained that where awareness of collective bargaining exists between workers and employers industrial conflicts are receded. Therefore, this study aims to ascertain factors affecting awareness of collective bargaining among public servants in Nigeria.

The public sector has persistently engulfed in industrial conflicts leading to countless industrial actions. This might have worsen in the present time as threats of industrial actions filled the atmosphere. For instance Academic Staff Union of the university (ASUU) and Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) are issuing warnings of strike if government fails to meet their various demands with the two being prominent among many others. There is no day that passes by in Nigeria without industrial conflicts or threats of industrial action in one organization or the other. In fact (Okene, 2010) opined that industrial conflicts have become so endemic that even our courts would be prepared to take judicial notice of them. The case between ASUU, NLC and federal government cannot even be resolved in court instead they opted for political process and foreign interventions.

Public organizations in Nigeria are presently confronted by economic meltdown with attendant negative implications for the workforce. Salary has waned leading to abandonment of appointments, job losses which culminated in productivity decline especially in an organization that is bedevilled with conflict like Imo state civil service. It is the reason behind government recent proclamation of the retrenchment of workers. Therefore, it is possible to envisage more industrial actions from onward. The governments in the country seem to have relegated collective bargaining and free negotiation between employers and employees to the background. Instead, they opted for political processes such as wage tribunals and commissions which offer workers little opportunity for contributions in the determination of the terms and conditions of employment (Chidi, Badejo, Ogunyomi, 2011). The state's preference for wage commissions or tribunals does not only violate labour rights as stipulated in ILO's conventions 87 of 1948 and 98 of 1949 which provides for freedom of association and rights of workers to organise and bargain collectively but entangles public institutions in stranglehold (Chidi, 2008).

It is incontestable that industrial harmony is essential to the realisation of the goals and objectives of every organisation especially the public sector in Nigeria (Ibietan, 2013). Fajana (2009), asserted that industrial conflict is a discord that occurs when the goals, interests or values of different groups block or frustrate each other's attempt to achieve their objectives. Since the goals of the parties in industrial relations system are dissimilar, conflict becomes inescapable. In most cases industrial conflict often manifests in the form of strike action, industrial unrest, industrial disharmony, trade dispute, etc. Frequent eruption of industrial conflicts in any organization may result in negative implications for productivity (Okeke 2018).

Nigeria with its current population estimated to be over 200 million people (National Population Commission, 2022) with abundant human and mineral resources; its significant oil industry and decades of military dictatorship

might provide an outstanding example of a transition economy where the institution of collective bargaining is increasingly important. More so, in Nigeria, likewise other developing nations, there is a widely held misconception between parties in industrial relations. This perhaps occurs as a result of awareness factor of collective bargaining by the parties involved. The union-management contentious interaction/relation might be ascribed to the existence of twofold interest groups who seek to protect their diverse goals and objectives. First group is employers of labour duly represented by the management whose primary concern is profit maximization or service delivery at any and all costs. The second group is employees/workers always represented by the union whose goal is to achieve improved welfare and better working conditions. The achievement of these seemingly disparate goals dictates attitudes and strategies that bring the interest groups at collision course and ultimately conflict which may have negative effects for the system as a whole (Yesfu 1982; Fajana, 2010; Ibietan, 2013;)

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Origin of Collective Bargaining

The practice of collective bargaining is as old as formal employment relationship itself. Collective bargaining original began with workers seeking for equity in the distribution of profits accruing from the organization for which they dedicated time, skills, potentials, as well as employers attempt to reciprocate by paying workers the agreed amount be it cash or kind for the services rendered (Fasan, 2011). According to (Trontman, 2009) the establishment of collective bargaining as a tool of industrial relation was given birth to out of the struggle as effective realization of industrial democracy a fundamental human rights continues to pose challenge. Suffice to say that until workers' employment rights are fully recognized employer-employee continues to be conflicting and crisis ridden. This is explains reasons why most underdeveloped countries have not achieved industrial peace. Collective bargaining serves as an essential idea with corporate governance that a company consists of divergent group; labour and management and need to adopt inclusive approach decision making in organization (Dowling & Welch, 2004).

The history of collective bargaining in Nigeria is tumultuous as the record is not straight due to military breach of civil rule and its abrogation of workers right to organise and bargain with employer instead decrees were instituted. The right of workers to collective bargaining was fully restored after prolong military rule by the government of Nigeria in the year 1997 with the aim of incorporating principles of industrial relations law and practice (Yehuda, 2006; Omole, 2008). The government until the promulgation of the Trade Union Act (TUA) in 1938 never recognised any union. The first recognised trade union was Nigerian Railway Union. It became the first registered organised labour union in Nigeria. The first success collective bargaining was between government and Nigerian Civil Service Union (NCSU) which resulted in wage increase in 1960 (Nigerian Department of Labour and Employment, 1960).

Although it possible for collective bargaining take place without official government involvement. It is required of the legal framework to spell out the parties engaging in collective consultations. Okene (2010) stated that by bargaining collectively with the management labour union pursues to give consent to its legitimate expectations that is improved conditions of work with particular reference to wages should guarantee a standardized efficient survival. Okene (2010) asserted that Nigeria labour policy/law provides for automatic recognition of trade unions for collective bargaining purposes. This means that the employers must recognize registered trade unions in their establishment and bargain with such unions in their bid to safeguard their economic interests in employment.

### Collective Bargaining in Nigeria

Generally speaking the utilization of collective bargaining in Nigeria is considered relatively poor. This can be partially accredited to conflicting roles of the government as both employer and regulator in industrial relation. Alabi & Okeke (2023) opined that most ministries do not have collective bargaining machinery and always poorly structured where they exist. Yet another reason attributed to marginal successes of collective bargaining in Nigeria is protracted military dictatorship (Okolie, 2010; Fajana, 2010; Ibietan, 2013; Adebisi, 2014) together with obsolete policies that are inconsistent. More so lack of political will of the government over an extended period of time towards establishing industrial relations harmony (Oyewunmi & Oyewunmi, 2014). Furthermore, the government relegation of collective bargaining/agreements, use of commission to address workers demand and negligence to the unions' demands has occasioned in the preference of strike over several matters (Omisore, 2011;

Okeke, 2018). Hayter, Fashoyin & Kochan, (2011) argued that collective bargaining as tool of industrial relation is still far on the way to accomplish its purpose. Hence, industrial peace and democracy remains misapprehension or at best still maturing in Nigeria.

The government at all levels persistently pays lip services to collective bargaining in the public sector. It continued to set aside collective bargaining and to give wage award to score political points despite its avowed commitment to ILO Convention 98 that mandates employers to freely bargain with employees (Chidi, 2008). The government in the course of regulating industrial relations system degenerate to the use of ad hoc commissions. In this, wage determination is by fiat (official order of the government). Thus, the state preference for wage commissions is against the principle of collective bargaining. It is against this background that ILO, Conventions with reference to 87 of 1948 and 98 of 1949 holds for workers freedom to association and right to collective bargaining. Chidi (2008) opine that the use of ad hoc commissions in determining wages and salary of workers is undemocratic and unilateral. It contravenes industrial principles and thus, it negates good democratic values.

### **The Marxist Perspective on Collective Bargaining**

Marx and Engels in 1875 developed a brand of conflict theory. The premise of this theory is that conflict in organization occur largely due to existence of two opposing group. The interest of these groups are disparate and each frustrate the other from being accomplished. Therefore industrial conflict is inevitable and trade unions are the true representative of workers against the exploitation of the management in the capitalist state (Adeoti, 1998). The explanation put forward by Marx and Engels on industrial conflict is based on social stratification and class differences that marks exploitation of capitalist society (Marx & Engels, 1875). Marx view conflict/discontent at the workplace as a product of specific forms of interaction (struggle) among identifiable historical forces in the relations of production. Marxist tradition is interested in explaining conflict between two opposing groups in the society. The opposing groups are the bourgeois and proletariat. Conflict occur when one group try to impose their values on the other group. Marx see conflict as inevitable occurrence in employment relations. Collective is institutional means by which occurring conflicts shall be mitigated.

The goals of management as the true representative of owners of industry is profit maximization which they pursue at all cost while those of employees are increased wages and better conditions of service (Adebisi, 2014). These disparate goals often bring the two parties at collision course leading to frequent industrial conflict we have in Nigeria today. Therefore, to achieve industrial harmony collective bargaining machinery should be institutionalized in the workplace as a means through which negotiation and resolution can take place between the opposing groups. The Marxist viewpoint has suffered from a number of criticisms. The belief of Marx and Engels on inevitability of industrial conflict has not stand the test of time as circumstances have shown that there can be peaceful industrial atmosphere. Western societies have achieved harmonious industrial relationship. African and other developing countries are following suit as industrial crisis have subsided in many countries unlike last decades. Mores so, functionalists like Parsons (1960) argued that even though conflict cannot be avoided but can be reduced to the barest minimum. Moreover, Marx was theorizing in the eighteenth century the world have advanced beyond what was obtained in the era he lived (Otaki, 2009).

### **METHODOLOGY**

This a cross-sectional survey design making use of Blowers proportion allocation method to select 528 workers from 10 ministries in the civil service. The specific objectives of the study include; to examine factors affecting awareness of collective bargaining in the public service; to determine factors hindering effective utilization of collective bargaining in the public sector; to find out the relationship between awareness of collective bargaining and organisational stability in the public service. Cluster sampling and simple sampling techniques were employed in order to achieve the objectives of the study. This study used interview technique and simple percentage to analyze the response.

#### **Using Blower's proportion allocation formula;**

$$\frac{Y \times X}{N} = Q$$

Where;

Q = Quota to be allocated

N = Total population of selected ministries

X = Number of workers in each ministry

Y = Sample size of the study

**Table 1: The ten selected ministries, their population and quota allocated.**

S/N	Ministry	No of Workers	Quota
1	Rural development	680	51
2	Agriculture	684	51
3	Industry and tourism	826	61
4	Education	720	53
5	Youth and sports	720	53
6	Transport	630	50
7	Commerce	675	51
8	Local government	728	54
9	Works	702	53
10	Internal Resources	690	51
<b>Total</b>		<b>7,055</b>	<b>528</b>

Source: IMSCSC, 2024

## RESULTS

### Factors that hinders awareness of collective bargaining

Factors (Items)	Frequency	Percentage
Improper orientation of newly employed workers in the civil service	60	11.7
Wrong perception of unions and doubts about their capacity to fight for the interests of workers	260	50.9
Perceived corruption among union executives	56	11.0
The decline in the relevance of unions in Nigeria	80	15.7
Lack of public relations in the union	51	10.0
I don't know	4	0.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: field survey, 2024

The information in Table 1 also shows the distribution of respondents on the factors that hinders the ideal awareness of collective bargaining. According to the table, wrong perception of unions and doubts about their capacity to

fight for the interests of workers was identified as by more than half of the respondents (50.9%) as a factor that prevents the ideal awareness of collective bargaining among workers in the state. Furthermore, 15.7%, 11.7%, 11.0% and 10.0% of the respondents believed that the decline in the relevance of unions in Nigeria, improper orientation of newly employed workers at the civil service, perceived corruption among union executives and lack of public relations in the union respectively contributes to the dearth of ideal awareness of collective bargaining among Imo State Civil Servants.

Finally, some 0.7% of the respondents do not know the factors that contribute to the phenomenon. Accordingly, the result shows that the majority hold the view that wrong perception of unions and doubts about their capacity to fight for the interests of workers impact on their knowledge of the collective bargaining.

Corroborating the above, responses elicited from IDI participants in the course of the interview sessions were analysed. According to most of the participants, the following factors are responsible for the lack of awareness of collective bargaining as a right of workers and a tool for change: (1) Lack of awareness of negotiation objectives by workers because of ineffective communication between bargainers and members, (2) failure of the civil service structure to incorporate newly employed into their rights especially that of collective bargaining and (3) perception of union executives as corrupt and selfish. In the perspective of one of the participants who responded to this issue,

Whether you are talking about labour unions in today's world or even in the past, there seems to be a vacuum in the communication chain between those who we send to represent us and us the members of the union. This is a recurring problem, it has always been and so it is right now. Whenever we gather together to address issues, the gathering turns out to be a tower of Babel because we end up arguing and I want to believe that there is something fundamentally wrong with this.

This means that the right and the key objectives of negotiation is unknown to many workers. Then a question comes up: 'How can you communicate something you barely know about to others.' It is difficult and nearly impossible and that is why we keep experiencing difficulty in negotiation because what is supposed to enlighten us to pursue our cause is what we have little or no knowledge of (Male, 50 years, Senior Civil Servant in the State Ministry of Finance).

Furthermore, another participant who blamed the situation on the failure of the civil service structure to incorporate newly employed into their rights especially that of collective bargaining had this to say:

Well to me, it is very simple to trace this lack of awareness of collective bargaining in an area like this to the indifferent role of the civil service and the union structure in really socialising and absorbing new members into the culture of the system especially in terms of knowing their rights.

Some of them don't even know they have the right to belong to a union and actively participate in the activities of the union and so when issues and matters arise they just appear confused. So, it is almost like a small group of executives and members are there to fight for the cause of the workers and it is so bad that they treat workers unfairly sometimes in that upon their failure to effectively bargain with the government or its committees, they dictate when it is time to take strike action and in any event that they are satisfied with the terms of the government they issue a circular and our own responsibility is to respond without questioning....[chuckles] robotic (Male, 52 years, Senior Civil Servant – Management Official in the State Ministry of Education).

On the issue of perception of union executives as corrupt and selfish, a participant believed that these perceptions go a thousand miles in informing their interest on knowing more about collective bargaining. In the words of the participant,

People, I mean workers and even those who are not workers have this perception about the 'people of the union' most especially the executives. People actually believe that they are in position of authority for their personal reasons or motives, which largely linked to economic returns or financial gains.

And any believe that they are not capable of effective bargaining. Some of them have even been accused of been involved in shady deals with the government; therefore they [the union's representatives] lack the will and the courage to bargain effectively. In view of this, workers' gaze on using collective bargaining as a tool for change in the civil service structure is completely misplaced.

Workers are now misled, since they no longer see collective bargaining as useful anymore (Female, 58 years, senior civil servant in the ministry of Education).

**Table 2 Factors hindering effective utilization of collective bargaining**

Factors (Items)	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of organizational behaviour	78	15.3
Lack of tactical planning	62	12.1
Lack of membership support and investment in the bargaining process	34	51.1
Lack of awareness of the institutional framework for negotiations among the leadership	34	6.7
Labour union policies	23	6.7
Credibility of the labour union		4.5
I don't know	19	3.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: field survey, 2024**

The result in table 2 shows the distribution of respondents according to the factors they think contribute to the ineffective utilization of collective bargaining in Imo State Civil Service. According to the table, a little over half of the respondents (51.1%) were of the opinion that lack of membership support and investment in the bargaining process is the factor. Also, 15.3%, 12.1%, 6.7%, 6.7% and 4.5% of the respondents were of the view that lack of organizational behaviour, Lack of tactical planning, lack of awareness of the institutional framework for negotiations among the leadership, labour union policies and the credibility of the labour union respectively are factors they think that hinder the effective utilization of collective bargaining in Imo State Civil Service. However, some 3.7% said they don't know the factor that hinders the effective utilization of collective bargaining in Imo State Civil Service. Complementing the above quantitative data is the qualitative data elicited from IDI participants in the study. According to the data, majority of the participants identified the following as factors that hinder the effective utilization of collective bargaining in Imo State Civil Service: (a) fear of official victimisation/intimidation by government (b) Divide and rule strategy of government (c) lack of government and workers to recognize collective bargaining as a tool for conflict resolution in the civil service and (d) government's cunningness and use of force or threat during collective bargaining among others. As an example, one of the participants who explained how government's attitude and use of force hinders the utilization of collective bargaining said:

The number one factor which we have always contended with both at the state and federal level is the government. The government has always shown her use of force and sometimes threat during what is supposed to be called bargaining or negotiation. That is when the representatives of government will begin to issue threat to workers through labour representatives to reconsider their demands. This also gets worsened when government is slow about initiating or honouring collective bargaining process and that is when they resort to setting up or consulting with wage commission to fix wage award with consultations with the labour union. Also when government comes to the table, she is not genuine and this compromises the will and the good faith the government is supposed to honour during bargaining. This attitude of government makes collective bargaining appears as a process that can't yield any tangible result (Male, 45 years, Management Official in the Ministry of Commerce).

Furthermore, another participant discussed the factor of the fear of official victimisation/intimidation by government as something a crucial factor hindering the effective utilization of collective bargaining. According to the participant;

*There is always the issue of fear of victimization by government at some point of a conflict situation. Although in the beginning labour executives will state their demands and talk and probably speak on behalf of the people, but at some point, they express fear for the safety of their jobs, their lives and other important things. This can even lead to a new twist union representatives are bribed to do the biddings of the government. All these psychological*

and mind thing can never allow collective bargaining to become successful (Female, 48 years, Senior Civil Servant in the Ministry of Agriculture).

In general, participants also associated the divide and rule strategy of government as a factor that hinders the effective utilization of collective bargaining in Imo State Civil Service. According to one of the participants, the divide and rule strategy in this case is a situation where government uses its agents or representatives to ‘penetrate’ the camp of the workers and their representatives with the sole intention of dividing them into groups and most importantly compromising their unity of purpose. These are the words of the participant:

*You understand that when a group like the State or Federal labour union is aggrieved and decides to press home their demands, they are usually unanimous, resolute at first and they are most commonly identified by their unity of purpose. However as soon as the representatives of the government step in, they start to look for the easiest channel [person] to penetrate. Usually, the group the government look for are the key executive members of the union and once they [the government] come they know their targets. Now this is how they do it: they come, see different persons at different times with different propositions, which of course is backed up with an enticing sum of money and once they got at least a person to be on their side, the entire force is thrown into disunity and this will prevent them from coming together and achieving a common objective. More than a distraction, the divide and rule strategy makes all efforts geared towards collective bargaining fruitless (Male, 52 years, senior civil servant in the ministry of Industry and Tourism).*

Although, the role of government has been under much analyses and scrutiny in this regard, a particular participant spoke of the role of workers and labour union members in hindering the success of collective bargaining during conflict. According to the participant,

*Workers and their representative themselves do not understand the power of collective bargaining as they most often demonstrate this lack of understanding through the display of an insufficient degree of organization and lack of capacity or skills to successfully get through a bargain. This lack of understanding is therefore the reason why government, which sometimes seems to understand better, employ other alternatives that are less effective to collective bargaining (Female, 59 years, Senior Civil Servant in the Ministry of Agriculture).*

**Table 3 Responses on whether they ‘agree’ or ‘disagree’ that these qualities typifies the concept of organizational stability**

Qualities (Items)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Total
Flexibility, adaptation and experimentation of new ideas	500(97.8)	11(2.2)	511(100)
Orientation of the rules of collective bargaining	511(100)	0(0)	511(100)
Alignment of individual efforts to efficiency	511(100)	0(0)	511(100)
Value fairness to all	511(100)	0(0)	511(100)
Collaboration and emphasis on cooperation among employees	511(100)	0(0)	511(100)

**Source: field survey, 20204**

The data in Table 3 shows the distribution of respondents on their attitude towards organization stability in the structure and function of the union in the state. According to the information contained in the table, majority of the respondents 97.8% ‘agree’ that flexibility, adaptation and experimentation of new ideas are the true characteristics of organizational stability meanwhile a small percentage of the respondents (2.2%) ‘disagree’ with these qualities.

Furthermore, the distribution of respondents according to the rest of the items on the table suggests that all the respondents ‘agree’ with the fact they represent qualities of organizational stability. In other words, orientation of the rules of collective bargaining, alignment of individual efforts to efficiency, value fairness to all and collaboration and emphasis on cooperation among employees are typical features of organizational stability.

**Table 4: Responses on whether awareness of collective bargaining can lead to organisational stability**

Category of response	Frequency	Percentage
Agreed	458	89.6
Disagreed	14	2.7
I can't say	39	7.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: field survey, 2024**

The information the table 4 above shows that preponderance of the study sample (89.6%) was of the view that awareness of collective bargaining can lead to organizational stability in the state civil service. On the contrary, 2.7% of the respondents do not believe that there is a relationship between awareness of collective bargaining and organizational stability. Similarly, some 7.6% of the respondents cannot tell whether such a relationship exists. This result is suggestive of the fact that there is a generally perceived relationship between awareness of collective bargaining and organizational stability. Here, the importance of collective bargaining is being projected again in the light of how it can improve organizational stability in a union. Responses were gathered from the IDI participants in this regard. According to a good number of the study participants who gave their insights to the issue, awareness of collective bargaining is a very significant tool or enabler of stability or instability in organisation. In the view of one of the participants,

*Collective bargaining can be an explosive topic for many organizations and a lack of its awareness can lead to failure to achieve the purpose for which it was formed and can further lead to disharmony in an organization. You see, there are times when the use of collective bargaining can go against its principles, where people [collective bargaining personnel and employers] that are supposed to bargain in a good faith and achieve result end up using intimidation and threats to impose their will on each other. When this is done, there is a reaction and the reaction is that the government would refuse to listen to these demands and frustration sets in (Male, 52 years, senior civil servant in the ministry of Industry and Tourism).*

In a similar light, another respondent described how the awareness of collective bargaining can lead to collaboration, participation among workers and subsequently organisational stability. According to this participant,

*Awareness of a thing is very crucial and critical in its evaluation and its use. As with issues concerning collective bargaining, understanding its principle is very crucial and knowing that both the employees and the government or management have different role to play in this regard. It is only when this understanding is put to work that we will experience effective participation, collaboration and stability in the overall organisation; I mean the civil service structure. For example, in the case of Imo State, government and even labour [union] seem not to be unaware of the aims and principles that guide the process of collective bargaining. And that is why they sometimes mismanage every opportunity to iron out issues that regularly come up and everything ends up being worse than when it all started. This is how it usually happens and before you know what is happening, strike and other forms of labour expression set in and government on the other hand is tempted to prove deaf to the people's demands (Male, 52 years, Senior Civil Servant – Management Official in the State Ministry of Education).*

Similarly, while attempting to describe the relationship that exist between awareness of collective bargaining and organisational instability, this participant maintained that:

*All I know is that there is no proper use of collective bargaining between workers and government and many attempt made to bargain yielded no fruit. It either ended on the stage of dialogue or frustration. In such events, it is always easier for the government to use commissions that mainly meet with the management who end up taking decisions on their own on how to resolve existing problems. In the end, the government alone gets to decide what happens and resolutions are forced down on the workers who never even participated in the dialogue (Male, 55 years, Management Officer in the Ministry of Rural Development).*

These responses are a reflection of the important role of awareness in understanding and employing collective bargaining as a tool for achieving organisational stability. In the perception of these participants, organisational stability is tied to the knowledge of what collective bargaining works for and the proper use of it. Also, the participants drew attention to the role that government and the union play in making employing collective bargaining for a purpose. Put together, lack of awareness of the use of collective bargaining on the side of government or the workers or both, leads to the misuse of collective bargaining and therefore this situation directly leads to destabilization in an organization.

## DISCUSSION

Following the analysis of data on factors affecting awareness of collective bargaining in the public service in Nigeria there was an interesting revelation from the data which showed that wrong perception of unions and doubts about their capacity to fight for the interests of workers impact on their knowledge of the collective bargaining. Specifically, it was discovered that wrong perception of unions and doubts about their capacity to fight for the interests of workers, the decline in the relevance of unions in Nigeria, improper orientation of newly employed workers at the civil service, perceived corruption among union executives and lack of public relations in the union respectively contributes to the lack of awareness of collective bargaining in the public institution. More so it was discovered that corruption of the official and government incessant relegation of collective bargaining, use force and preference of ad hoc commission by the government has affected workers knowledge and awareness of the phenomenon.

Similarly, these factors were also responsible for poor utilization and institutionalization of collective bargaining. Furthermore, lack of organizational behaviour, Lack of tactical planning, lack of awareness of the institutional framework for negotiations among the leadership, labour union policies and the credibility of the labour union respectively are factors that hinders effective utilization of collective bargaining in Nigeria. The study disclosed many factors such as fear of official victimisation/intimidation by government, lack of government and workers to recognize collective bargaining as a tool for conflict resolution in the civil service and government's cunningness and use of force or threat during collective bargaining as issuing confronting awareness and knowledge of public servants to collective bargaining. This result is consistent with the findings of Longe (2015) that ceaseless labour discontentment and incessant industrial actions, enfeebled and enervated bargaining structure, undemocratic and no diffused nature of collective bargaining process, widening gulf of relationship between labour and management, lack of parity of power on the negotiation table and government interventionist measures were responsible for ineffective collective bargaining. The central issue in the current findings is the process in which the role of government to assert influences on workers and use of force to intimidate labour leaders which does not enable effective bargaining.

Conversely, the salient findings of this study are that collective bargaining, characterised by good faith is still lacking in Nigerias' 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 advanced 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 Ibieta (2013) puts 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

There is a low level of awareness of collective bargaining and its potentials in industrial conflict resolution has not been achieved. Low awareness has reduced stakeholder's participation in exploring the potentials of collective bargaining not only for conflict resolution but also for organizational stability. This has now given the government the space for abuse of international laws and acts that guide workers and other stakeholders. The government, the workers, unions and management are all responsible for the marginal awareness and poor performance of collective bargaining in conflict resolution. Collective bargaining although desired by workers have not been

utilized by the government as there are no evidence that the machinery is in actual use or that such machinery have been productive in the time past and especially in the state. The study also found that membership of the union is very low among some notable groups of workers (females, newly employed, young workers and junior staff). Equally, the study found that government use of commission and panels to approach conflict instead of the use of collective bargaining is a fact. This has given government undue powers to alter the structure and function of unions and this had made them very ineffective.

To improve collective bargaining awareness and effectiveness, government and labour unions should institutionalize regular training and orientation programmes for civil servants, especially newly employed staff. Trade unions must strengthen internal democracy, transparency, and communication to rebuild workers' trust. Government should demonstrate genuine commitment to collective bargaining by reducing reliance on ad hoc wage commissions and adhering to ILO conventions. Joint consultative committees should be revitalized to promote dialogue and cooperation. Additionally, capacity-building initiatives should be introduced for union leaders to enhance negotiation skills. These measures will improve awareness, encourage good-faith bargaining, and promote industrial harmony and organizational stability. Government should be encouraged to embrace international labour standards and conventions so that they can see the need to always resort to collective bargaining in the face of conflict. In other words government should jettison its intimidation of workers or use of force real commitment to the course of collective bargaining should be a task to be considered. 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. Also the union must promote inclusiveness and interval democracy in order to endear themselves more to workers. The union must equally work towards raising workers consciousness so that they can develop more interests and enthusiasm in trade unionism.

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