

Politics of Labour Unionism in the Implementation of National Minimum Wage in Osun State Civil Service, Nigeria

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Abstract

Labour unionism has been seen over the years as one of the most widely recognized and well-known in every organization's workforce, which seeks to protect the rights and interests of employees from erratic economic exploitation. The study work, therefore, explored the main thrusts of labour unionism in the implementation of the national minimum wage in Osun State Civil Service, Nigeria. To realize the central objective, the study used mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) and data were generated both from primary and secondary sources. The population of civil servants in the Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) in Osun state was 50254 and the sample size for the study was 400 using Taro Yamane formulae, and a simple percentage was utilised for the quantitative data analysis. Findings from the study revealed that labour unions pressurise for a decent wage and the implementation of a national minimum wage. Also, labour unions and state governments scientifically brainstorm on workers' requests. The Paper concluded that Labour unions in Osun are monitoring the activities of the government and its policies on behalf of the workers to ensure that government does not act illegally or unethically. The paper recommended that government should try as much as possible to maintain a good and cordial relationship with their employers/union members to avoid clashes that may wrench the organisation thus affecting organizational performance.

Keywords: Civil Service, Labour Unionism, Minimum Wage, Implementation

INTRODUCTION

Labour unionism has been seen over the years as one of the most widely recognized and well-known in every organization's workforce, which seeks to protect the rights and interests of labour (employees) from erratic economic exploitation and the abuse of dignity of labour by the employers (Ali, 2012). It is subsequently seen as an essential tool and instrument used by workers in organizations to seek understanding as well as to influence government decisions that could be detrimental or contrary to the terms and the contract of agreement.

The aims and objectives of these unions just like that of any other trade union in the world were nothing other than to obtain better conditions of service and employment for their members (Raji, 2015). As of 1919, labour unionism in Nigeria was very young and still an infant such that workers did not attach any significant importance to it for their work or jobs. However on assumptions of legal existence

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through the enactment of the Trade Union Organization Act 1938 which permits workers to form a union that will influence and protects their rights and interest at any given level, workers' eyes became opened as well as that of the employers who saw the workers as partners in progress rather than mere labourers that can be hired and fired at any given point in time without any fear or contradiction.

The general ideology behind labour unionism is that workers believe that, by coming together as a team, they will be able to fight for their rights against any economic exploitation and social injustice that could be met them by the government concerning the job. To operate in an industry harmoniously, the workers expect the government to treat them fairly by giving them a reasonable wage and respecting their dignity of labour. But, where the employers lose sight of this, there is bound to be a conflict of interests between the employer and employees which could retard the attainment of employer objectives as well as some consequences that could be expensive to society in general.

This study is divided into nine (9) parts and organized as follows: The first part explores the background information of the study. The second segment gives a comprehensive statement of the problem. The research question was presented in the third segment, while the fourth section represents the conceptual discourse. The fifth part discusses the evolution of unionism in Nigeria; the methodology is presented in the sixth section. Labour unionism in the minimum wage implementation process in Osun State was presented in the seventh part while the discussion of major findings; conclusion and recommendations were presented in the eighth and ninth respectively.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

National minimum wage implementation across the civil service in Nigeria has always been problematic and filled with different challenges resulting in industrial conflict, salary crises, and other human resource management issues such as threatened job security, and an embargo on employment and promotion. The minimum wage is on the exclusive list of the federal government, the implication is that when the federal government fixes the minimum wage, the federating states are expected to take a queue from that and do likewise for the state civil servants (Nwokolo, 2011). Contrary to this expectation, the implementation of the national minimum wage in Osun state has always been problematic which led to a series of labour unionism. For instance, Osun

State civil servants embarked on strike from March 1994 to April 1994 for the government to rescind its agreement with civil servants (Adegoroye and Ayinde, 2007).

Furthermore, from February to May 1998, civil servants embarked on a strike action to press home their demands. Similarly, between October 1999 and January 2000, civil servants embarked on strike to demand the payment of ₦6,500 minimum wages, as announced by the Federal government while over 3,000 workers lost their jobs because of the minimum wage. Also, from March 2003 to May 2003, workers embarked on strike because of salaries and arrears owed by the government while from March 2016 to August 2018, the Osun state government paid full salary to bracket categories (grade levels 01-07), 75% salary to grade levels 08-12 categories and 50% salary to category grade levels 15. Teachers and local government workers are largely affected. Osun state government refuses to implement ₦18, 000 national minimum wage; workers have held several congresses to call the attention of the government to the need to fulfill its promise of implementing the minimum wage but using dubious strategies including claiming to have implemented a minimum wage (Shola, 2017). However, the immediately federal government announced the ₦30,000 national minimum wage for all civil servants in Nigeria; the Osun state government properly implemented grade levels 01 – 06 while grade levels 7 – 17 (i.e consequential adjustment) was not properly implemented, and the rule of salary relativity was not kept. These constraints are manifested in the spate of unrest and tensions usually witnessed by labour unionism at every attempt to adjust wages and salaries in the civil service and these may lead to employees exhibiting bad attitudes such as a lack of cooperation, poor commitment, and decline in productivity. On that premise, an attempt was made to provide answers to the research question

- i. To what effects are the dynamics of labour unionism in the minimum wage implementation process in Osun state?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The paper aims to assess the politics of labour unionism in the implementation of the national minimum wage in the Osun State Civil Service. The specific objective of the study is to:

- i. Evaluate the effects of dynamics of labour unionism in the minimum wage implementation process in Osun state.

CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE

Minimum Wage

Wage, as a concept, is derived from a French word – *wagier*, which means promise or pledge. Wages are returned to labour on a daily and weekly basis (Agba & Ushie, 2018). Wage is often used interchangeably with compensation management. In the narrow sense, the wage is the price given to a worker for services rendered, however, in the broader sense; wages are compensations or remunerations given for overall services rendered apart from the basic wage. It includes allowances, benefits, and other financial support like bonuses, workmen's compensation, holiday pay, leave allowances, overtime, etc.

Ekwuaba (2018) says that the motive of working is to receive payment for services rendered at the end of a given period based on an agreement. Consequently, Drubbel, (2001) defined wage as income derived from labour, figures based on the number of hours worked. Wage is the rate of what is determined by supply and demand, it is calculated for work completed by the hour, day, week, and month or by individual job or service performed. Lesley (2004) is also of the view that wage payment is made, usually by an employer, in return for work or service rendered by the employees. It is in the form of a salary or fee paid to a person of official or professional status. In other words, it is a fixed regular payment, usually daily or weekly, by an employer to an unskilled or manual worker. Wages are paid for the expenditure of physical or mental efforts in the production of goods and services. International Labour Office (2009) defines minimum wage as:

The lowest level of remuneration permitted by the law in each country; has the force of law and is enforceable under the threat of penal or other appropriate sanctions. The minimum wage fixed by collective agreements, made binding by public authorities is included (p. 2).

In light of the above, minimum wage is a universal policy instrument legally permitted in an organisation to meet the needs of workers such as food, housing,

clothing, healthcare, and utilities. Foguel *et al* (2001) defines minimum wage as a level of earning, good enough to provide the satisfaction of the basic needs of a worker, according to the geographic region he or she is living in. It is a remuneration that would guarantee or enable an employee to fulfill his or her basic needs of food, hygiene, clothing, and transportation. Furthermore, Eme (2010) explains that minimum wage implies the lowest level of wage legally permitted in industry or government organisations. The fundamental goal in establishing minimum wage is to assure earners a standard of living above the lowest permitted by health and decency.

Civil Service

The Civil service is a wide organization that is controlled and funded by the government, it involves bureaucrats and technocrats of the state, not political or judicial office holders employed in a civil capacity with their remunerations paid wholly from money voted in the parliament (Omoruyi, 1991). The Civil service is the executive branch of the government machinery that exists to effect government policies. The effectiveness of government machinery depends on the efficiency of the civil service's ability to drive policy decisions. Consequently, the civil service is the custodian of the government's reputation to carry out policies efficiently; this undermines the government's position and stability in power. Civil service is structured into administrative class; executive class; professional class and junior cadre class. Civil service reform is the modification of the government's human capacity system to maximize administrative values. It is a colonial creation; this model was inherited in Nigeria from our colonial master (Britain) in structure (Adewumi, 2008).

Adamolekun (2002), states that civil service is the machinery of government; this is so in Britain and most commonwealth countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. In the British conception, the civil service is used to refer to the body of permanent officials appointed to assist the decision-makers. Section 318 sub-section 1 of the 1999 constitution defined the civil service as:

Service rendered to the federation, state, or even local level in a civil capacity, staff to the office of the president, vice president, governor, deputy governor, ministries, departments, and agencies of the federation and state with the responsibility to the business of the government of the federation or state (p. 86).

The civil service is the body of men and women employed in a civil capacity and nonpolitical career basis by the federal and state governments primarily to render and effect government decisions and implementation (Ipinlaiye, 2001). Such career officers got their appointment from the Civil Service Commission, and exercise the power of delegating duties and responsibilities to ministries, departments, and agencies of government by laying down rules. Presently, the civil service is an institution bequeathed to mankind in the process of revolutionizing an efficient way of organizing large human organizations. It is in this respect that the civil service is regarded as a bureaucracy. Civil service is a complex body of permanent officials appointed to assist the political executives in formulating, executing, and implementing government policies in ministries and extra-ministerial departments within which government business is carried out. The new Encyclopedia Britannica (2004), states that the civil service is the body of government officials employed in civil occupations that are neither political nor judicial. Bezzina (1994), asserts that the civil service is the employees selected and promoted based on merit and seniority system, which includes an examination. World Book Encyclopedia (2004), noted that the civil service consists of people employed by the state to run public institutions of a country. Anazodo (2016), argues that the civil service in Nigeria comprises workers in various ministries, departments, and agencies apart from political officeholders. The people working in the ministries, departments, and agencies employed by the government are called civil servants.

EVOLUTION OF UNIONISM IN NIGERIA

The unionism in Nigeria can be tied to four major factors, namely: the character of the colonial government under the leadership of Colonel Frederick Lugard, which was more or less a military government. The government drew its support from the Western African Frontier Force (WAFF) which was under the command of Lugard. In other words, the colonial government under the leadership of Lugard embarked on unfriendly and inhuman labour policies and practices that were imposed and sustained by the force of arms.

The second was the application of draconian laws during wars of conquest by the colonial agents to extract and secure the conformity and support of interest groups. It was a period when Nigeria's kingdoms and empires were conquered militarily, leading to their sack. For instance, the Hausa-Fulani emirate was conquered in 1906, followed by a declaration that it constituted northern Nigeria. Also, the 1906

amalgamation of the southern protectorate and Lagos colony to create the southern protectorate thus prepared the ground for the amalgamation of southern and Northern protectorates in 1914.

The third was the emerging political order sustained by the might and force of the British rulers and the lack of consent and support of the people. However, organized interest groups-trade unions were inaugurated to liberate their society and destabilize the colonial government.

The last factor was the demonstration by the colonial government that it was governing in the interest of the British crown and not in the interest of the colonized people. In other words, welfare schemes and special legislation that would have bettered the lives of the colonized people were of little interest to the colonial government. Consequently, workers and their organizations complemented by the nationalist politicians' had to fight the imperial power for a voice in the scheme of things. These chiefly contributed to the emergence of trade unions in Nigeria. For instance, the railway worker union was formed in 1899. The activities of the labour unions no doubt made the colonial government formally pass legislation in 1938 aimed at meeting some of their demands increased wages and the opening of the political space. (Cole, 2001).

Ugbogu (2000) notes that Trade Unions are pressure groups created mainly for the economic interest of their members. The Trade Union Decree No 31 of 1976, laws of the federation 1990 and the Nigerian 1999 Constitution as amended defines a trade union as any combination of workers or employees whether temporary or permanent. Furthermore, it states that the purpose of the law is to regulate the term and conditions of employment of workers whether the combination in question would not apart from this decree, be unlawful because of any of its proposes being in restraint of trade and whether its purposes do or do not include the provision of benefit for it. Okafor and Bode-Okunade (2006) however submit that trade unions have five objectives, namely:

1. To work towards securing a maximum degree of job security in pursuance of workers' enjoyment of terms and conditions of service.
2. To work towards ensuring improved terms and conditions of employment for its members.
3. To work towards improving the bargaining power of its members through collective support vis-à-vis the employers.

4. Seek to improve the level and status of its members as they remain in the organization.
5. Seek to increase democratic practice in issues and decisions affecting its members in their organizations.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA PRESENTATION

A descriptive survey approach was adopted by drawing data from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources were gathered through the questionnaire and interview. A structured questionnaire was administered. The interview was conducted in a face-to-face format of the interview. The face-to-face method provides the interviewer with the free opportunity of free exchange ideas and get more detailed responses. Aside, it allows the interviewer to establish rapport with the respondents and clarify ambiguous issues.

The questionnaire was administered to the staff from grade levels 07 – 17 in the selected MDAs. Grade levels 07 – 17 were chosen because of their level of education and experience. It is expected that the respondents provide information concerning the issues of Labour Unionism in the Implementation of the National Minimum Wage in Osun State Civil Service. The questionnaire method allowed the respondents to express their views freely without being guided because the target respondents of this study are educated. Therefore, they have little or no problem with the questionnaire. Data in this study were presented in tables. A five-point Likert scale was used in the following manner: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD); the responses on a five-point scale were measured by the highest percentage.

The target population of the study consists of staff in the ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) in Osogbo, Osun State. Hence, the sample size will be determined by the Taro Yamane (1976) techniques/methods; and this is expressed as thus:

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

Where: n = Sample size

N = total population of selected Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) in Osun state

$$k = 1$$

$$e = 0.05\%$$

$$n = 50254$$

$$n = \frac{50254}{1 + 50254 (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{50254}{50255 \times 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{50254}{125.63}$$

$$n = \mathbf{400}$$

Therefore the sample size for the study is 400. A total of 400 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the selected MDAs.

Based on the above formulae, simple percentages were used to allot questionnaires to each selected Ministries, Department and Agency (MDAs) in Osun state, presented in the table below.

Table 1: Staff Population and Allotted Questionnaire to the selected MDAs

S/ N	Names of MDAs	Population	Allotted Questionnaire
1	Osun State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB)	14012	111
2	Osun State Ministry of Finance, Osogbo	532	5
3	The Head of Service, Office of the Head of Service, Osogbo	483	4
4	Osun State Council for Arts and Culture, Osogbo	308	2
5	Osun State Teaching Service Commission (TESCOM), Osogbo	12905	102
6	Osun State Local Government Service Commission (LG STAFF), Osogbo	21601	172

7	Osun State Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, Osogbo	413	4
Total		50254	400

Source: Osun State Ministry of Information, 2023

Table 2: Respondents Rate

	Items	Number	%
1	Number of samples	400	
2	Number of returned and fully filled	329	82.25 %
3	Number of returned but wrongly filled	27	6.75 %
4	Number of unreached respondents	44	11 %
Total			100 %

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

A total number of four hundred questionnaires were administered; a total number of forty-four (44) respondents could not be reached while three hundred and fifty-six (356) were retrieved from employees in the Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) in Osun State. Out of the total number of three hundred and fifty-six (356) retrieved, only three hundred and twenty-nine (329) questionnaires were duly filled without any errors.

Table 3: Bio Data of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	225	68.4 %
Female	104	31.6 %
Total	329	100 %
Ages	Frequency	Percentage
30-40	109	33.1 %
41-50	158	48.1 %
51-60 Above	62	18.8 %
Total	329	100 %
Education	Frequency	Percentage
SSCE	10	3.1 %
ND/NCE	60	18.2 %

HND/B.Sc.	196	59.6%
Master	58	17.6%
PhD	5	1.5%
Total	329	100%
Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	291	88.5%
Single	29	8.8%
Divorced	9	2.7%
Total	329	100%

Source: Survey data collected from fieldwork, 2023

As earlier presented, four hundred (400) questionnaires were administered; three hundred and sixty-one (361) were retrieved, but only three hundred and forty (340) questionnaires were dully filled without any errors.

The above table indicated that there is an overwhelming preponderance of male respondents. The table shows sixty-eight-point four percent (68.4%) of males and thirty-one-point six percent (31.6%) of females. It is equally indicated on the table, the age group of the respondents: the figure indicates that individuals between the ages of 30 - 40 years widely represent with a response of thirty-three point one percent (33.1%). An individual between the age of 41 - 50 years constitutes most of the responses in this survey with forty-eight point one percent (48.1%) while eighteen point eight percent (18.8%) represents individuals between the ages of 51-60 years and above The table also displays educational qualification of the respondents; most of the respondents have qualifications up to the university and polytechnic level which represents fifty-nine point six percent (59.6%) while fifteen point three percent (15.3%) respondents hold Master; seventeen point six percent (17.6%) respondents holds NCE/ND; three point one percent 3.1% respondents hold SSCE while one point five (1.5%) holds Ph.D. among the respondents. All educational levels were duly represented in this questionnaire because the questionnaire was administered to all staff from grade levels 03 - 17 in the selected MDAs. Grade levels 03 - 17 were chosen because of experiences and it's expected that the respondents provide information concerning the issues of labour unionism in the minimum wage implementation process.

Additionally, the table also displays marital status which eighty-eight-point five percent (88.5%) respondents have married; eight-point eight percent (8.8%) respondents

are yet to marry while two-point seven percent (2.7%) respondents recorded as a divorcee.

LABOUR UNIONISM IN THE MINIMUM WAGE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS IN OSUN STATE

Regarding the dynamic activities of labour unions to the minimum wage implementation in Osun State Civil Service; Seven (7) questions were designed to capture respondents' opinions on the activities of labour unions on minimum wage implementation in Osun state civil service.

Table 4:Key: SA (Strongly Agreed), A (Agreed), U (Undecided), D (Disagreed), SD (Strongly Disagreed)

S/ N	Statements	SA 5	A 4	U 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	Aggregate Response
1.	Labour unions pressurise for a decent minimum wage in the state.	47 (14.4%)	186 (56.5%)	21 (6.3%)	43 (13.1%)	32 (9.7%)	329 100%	Agreed
2.	Labour unions antagonise the government.	5 (1.5%)	13 (3.9%)	17 (5.2%)	173 (52.6%)	121 (36.8%)	329 100%	Disagreed
3.	Labour unions act as employee representatives.	57 (17.4%)	181 (55.1%)	17 (5.1%)	46 (13.9%)	28 (8.5%)	329 100%	Agreed
4.	Labour unions embark on industrial strikes.	176 (53.4%)	56 (17.1%)	15 (4.6%)	35 (10.6%)	47 (14.3%)	329 100%	Strongly Agreed
5.	Labour unions engage in frequent protests.	92 (27.9%)	41 (12.6%)	15 (4.5%)	147 (44.7%)	34 (10.3%)	329 100%	Disagreed
6.	Labour unions serve as a watchdog to workers, the government, and its labour policies	45 (13.7%)	171 (51.9%)	34 (10.4%)	48 (14.5%)	31 (9.5%)	329 100%	Agreed
7.	Labour unions have the legal power to enforce the minimum wage in the state.	9 (2.7%)	5 (1.5%)	44 (13.5%)	151 (45.9%)	120 (36.4%)	329 100%	Disagreed

Source: Survey data collected from fieldwork, 2023

The above table demonstrates affirmation responses regarding the opinions of respondents about the dynamics of unionism in the implementation of the national

minimum wage in the ministry, Department, and Agencies (MDAs) in Osun state. However, the above table showed the first statement that $13.1\% + 9.7\% = 22.8\%$ disagreed while $14.4\% + 56.5\% = 70.9\%$ agreed on the first statement posed to respondents which interpret that labour unions were pressurised government for a decent minimum in Osun state. Discovery from quantitative results shows that labour unions bulldoze for a decent minimum wage in Osun State. It is a sad reflection that workers will very often have to practically beg, and pressurise the government to negotiate and/or accede to their legitimate claim to improvements in their welfare. The respondent from the Osun state head of service affirmed that:

“When it comes to decent minimum wage fixing; only social dialogue and collective bargaining can help strike the balance between the legitimate needs of both workers and government” (Interview¹, 2023).

Discovery from quantitative results shows that labour unions bulldozed for a decent minimum wage in Osun State. Labour unions maintain and improve workers' terms and conditions through bargaining with the government but it is a sad reflection that workers will pressurise their employers to negotiate and/or accede to their legitimate claim to improvements in their welfare.

Labour unions antagonise the government: The above table demonstrated affirmation responses regarding the opinion of respondents on maybe labour unions were antagonising the government or not. The table shows that $52.9\% + 36.8\% = 88.1\%$ disagreed while $1.5\% + 3.9\% = 5.4\%$ agreed with the statement which interprets that labour unions were not antagonised state government over the issue of national minimum wage implementation but operate within the ambit of the law. While the Secretary of Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Osun State Chapter, posited that:

Nothing like antagonising in doing what the law permitted us to do, we are operating within the ambit of law, aside, do you think our state government would do the needful; if fold up our arms? The answer is NO. (Interview², 2023)

Both quantitative and qualitative upshot that labour unions were not antagonised government but did what the law permitted them to do.

Labour unions act as employee representatives: The third statement in the above table demonstrated affirmation responses regarding the opinion of respondents on the issue of whether labour unions act as employee representatives or not. Table shows in that $13.9\% + 8.5\% = 22.4\%$ disagreed while $17.4\% + 55.1\% = 72.5\%$ agreed to the statement which means the majority of workers in Osun state agreed that labour unions represent them before the governments. According to Lanre (2018) says an employee representative, is to represent a worker within the organisation in negotiation or consultation with the employer. Effective employee representative plays a critical link between the staff and management in an organisation. The respondent from the Osun State Ministry of Finance, Osogbo, argued that:

The relationship between labour unions and the State Government on the issue of demands is two sides of coins or two parallel lines. Government is not ready to give while labour stands to take, so, to achieve our aim, with present our demands scientifically to the government within the ambit of law which left the government with no option but to heed labour requests. (Interview³, 2023)

Research evidence demonstrates that labour unions represent the interest of civil servants within the ambit of the law. The activities of both government and labour unions were guided by the law which provides a framework and rules to aid resolve the dispute between individuals and among parties.

Labour unions embark on industrial strike: The table which demonstrated affirmation responses regarding the opinion of respondents on the labour unions on industrial strike, the table shows that $10.6\% + 14.3\% = 24.6\%$ disagreed while $53.4\% + 17.1\% = 70.5\%$ agreed to the statement which means labour unions prone to industrial action (Strike) if all avenue to demand their request has exhausted. While the Secretary of Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Osun State Chapter, posited that:

In the past, we do go on strike but now, we presented our demands to the government scientifically, and hardly for government to say NO to labour's requests. (Interview⁴, 2023).

Labour unions engage in frequent protests: The above table demonstrated affirmation responses regarding the opinion of respondents on labour unions' frequent

protests, the table shows that $44.7\% + 10.3\% = 55\%$ disagreed while $27.9\% + 12.6\% = 40.5\%$ agreed to the statement which means the quantitative result shows that labour unions in engaged in protests but not frequently. Agitation, protests, and confrontations of any kind have always been part and parcel of the Nigerian system. Osun state workers protested on the 28th of August 2017 due to modulated salary; non-promotion of staff; the absence of work tools, and non-payment of their allowance by the Osun state government. However, a relevant response to the above question was encapsulated by the Secretary, Joint Negotiating Council (JNC), Osun State Chapter expressed that:

“The era of the strike has gone in Osun state. We presented our demands scientifically to the government and find all the means to be on the same page with the government”. (Interview⁵, 2023).

Labour unions serve as a watchdog to the worker, government, and its labour policies: The sixth statement in the above table which demonstrated affirmation responses regarding the opinion of respondents on the issue of labour unions serves as a watchdog to the worker, government, and its labour policies. The table shows that $14.5\% + 9.5\% = 24\%$ disagreed while $13.7\% + 51.9\% = 65.6\%$ agreed with the statement which means the quantitative outcome revealed that labour unions in Osun state served as a watchdog to workers, government, and its labour policies. Labour unions monitor the activities of the government and its policies on behalf of the workers to ensure that government does not behave illegally or unethically. The Chairman Trade Union Congress (TUC), Osun State Chapter submitted that:

We are eagles; all the government information is on our palms; we are in the global world; we are watching all the government activities and their policies. (Interview 6, 2023).

The purpose of labour unions is to monitor the activities of the government and its policies on behalf of the workers to ensure that government does not behave illegally or unethically.

Labour unions have the legal power to enforce the minimum wage in the state: The seventh and last statement on the above table demonstrated affirmation responses regarding the opinion of respondents on the issue may be labour unions have the legal power to enforce the minimum wage in the state or not. Table shows that $45.9\% + 36.4\% = 82.4\%$ disagreed while $2.7\% + 1.5\% = 4.2\%$ agreed to the statement.

It was clearly shown that labour unions have no legal power to enforce (but court) the state government to implement a national minimum wage but labour unions have the legal right to protest or engage in the last resort which is industrial action (Strike) while the power to enforce lies on the executive arm of government, not an individual or groups of people. The respondent from the Ministry of Budget and Planning, Osogbo, submitted that:

They (labour) cannot enforce, they are not in the best position to enforce, and they can only agitate and use what the law permitted them to do i.e. dialogue, protest, and strike. (Interview⁷, 2023)

Our ground norms i.e., our constitution, it does not empower or appoint the Nigeria Labour Congress as an enforcer of any law but they can protest or engage in the last resort which is industrial action (Strike) to press their demands.

DISCUSSION OF MAJOR FINDINGS

It was discovered that labour unions pressurise for a decent minimum wage. Also, labour union and state government scientifically brainstorm. The study further discovered that workers very often have to practically beg, and pressurise their employers to negotiate and/or accede to their legitimate claim to improvements in their welfare. In this regard, Okolie, (2012) explained that in Nigeria, most agreements entered on behalf of the government were not usually honoured. Government enters agreements with workers with the intention of not keeping to the agreements. In Nigeria, workers continue to groan under the tutelage of those who are privileged to find themselves in the corridors of power while the implementation of the national minimum wage was aimed at providing an acceptable standard of living for low-paid workers and bridging social inequality in the widening economic and social gaps among workers.

It was clear from the study that labour unions were not antagonizing but agitating against their right from the government which is permitted by the law of the land and labour unions cannot do much to stress the government over their demand. The study also revealed that labour unions represent the interest of civil servants within the ambit of the law. The relationship between labour unions and the state government on the issue of demands is two parallel lines. Government is not ready to give while labour stands to take just like a bourgeois and proletarian.

It was also established in the study that labour unions in Osun state are prone to industrial struggle. For example, industrial action was held in Osun state between February to May 1998; October 1999, and January 2000; March 2003 to May 2003; March 2016 to August 2018. Also, former governor, Rauf Aregbesola's administration was taken to court by the labour unions when the state government refuses to implement a national minimum wage of ₦18, 000 per month. It was revealed that labour unions served as a watchdog to workers, the government, and its labour policies. The study further discovered that labour unions monitor the activities of the government and its policies on behalf of the workers to ensure that government does not behave illegally or unethical. It was clearly shown that labour unions have no legal power to enforce (but court) state government to implement national minimum wage but labour unions have legal right to protest or engage in the last resort which is industrial action (Strike) permitted by the law.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Labour unions in organisation are to monitor the activities of the government and its policies on behalf of the workers to ensure that government does not behave illegally or unethically. Therefore, Labour unionism has also been ascertained as an avenue through which the workers' general welfare and condition of service is improved. Labour union also protects their members against indiscriminate or arbitrary economic exploitation by the government.

The study has both theoretical and empirical significance. The study would contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the subject matter by assessing the politics of labour unionism in the implementation of the national minimum wage in the Osun State Civil Service and Nigeria at large. The study would help in examining and pushing further the academic frontiers as it is related to the implementation of the national minimum wage.

Empirically, the study provides a clearer understanding of labour unionism in the implementation of the national minimum wage in the Osun State Civil Service. It would substantiate an effective means of achieving a high standard of living among civil servants. It would also assist policy analysts, policymakers, bureaucrats, administrators, and political leaders, among others, in taking decisions on matters that have to do with minimum wage setting, adjustment, and implementation.

Based on the findings of this study, some recommendations have been drawn which if implemented effectively and efficiently would contribute immensely to labour/government relationships in the organization. Recognition of unions and their contributions brings harmonies to the working relationship between the union and the government; therefore, such a relationship must be sought to enhance organizational performance. Government should try as much as possible to maintain a good and cordial relationship with their employers/union members to avoid clashes that may wrench the organisation thus affecting organizational performance. Union leaders should try as much as possible to utilize every peaceful avenue and grievance procedure for negotiation and dialogue as well as for collective bargaining before resorting to strike actions. To boost the workers' morale toward organisational performance, the government must pay attention to employees' demands, especially regarding improved conditions of services. Where this is addressed, it will go a long way in fostering understanding between the government and the union members or employees as well as in minimizing the level of conflict between labour and government.

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