

ACADEMIC PAPER

Employment casualisation and trade union survival strategies in the beverage sector in Lagos, Nigeria

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Previous studies have largely interrogated the challenges of workforce casualisation in Nigeria with sparse attention to the reactions of the trade unions to this work arrangement. The paper, therefore, explores the survival strategies of trade union to employment casualisation in the Nigerian beverage sector. It explores the narratives of trade union relevance amidst increased informalisation, and the efficacy of its strategies. The Marxist conflict theory was employed as a theoretical leaning to understand labour unions' position in contending with management exploitations in the workplace. A total of 12 trade union officials were selected for interviews through purposive and convenient sampling. The study found a diminishing trade union relevance with the increasing spate of informalisation, while the collective bargaining strategy of the union was hardly utilised in addressing employment casualisation, although education and (re)training programmes show a positive outlook. The study takes the position for a review of the Nigerian labour laws, specifically the Trade Union Act of 2005 as amended, as no provisions in this legislation give recognition to casual employment, an act that is further hampering trade unions' strategic effort in ensuring a decent workplace for all.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Approximately, half of Nigeria's labour force is employed in non-standard employment (NSE) with evidence of debilitating work conditions and absence of work security among others (National

Bureau of Statistics-NBS, 2018). Interestingly, a significant fraction of this number belongs to the regiment of the Nigerian population living on less than a dollar per day (NBS, 2018). Therefore, the challenges of employment casualisation can (to an extent) be attributed to one of the contributing factors propelling the increasing rate of poverty in Nigeria,

The article questions the role of trade union strategies as a responsive measure to the plunge of trade union relevance being advanced by the ascending influence of employment casualisation in Nigeria's beverage sector. The paper argues that the growing influence of capitalists in the context of work structure has indeed engendered a somewhat obvious concern for the meaning of work, and the sustenance of the labour union on the other hand. While this influence is fast spreading, especially in organisations situated in the global south, such as Nigeria, the wave at which traditional employment types are being exchanged for non-standard employment remains a puzzle for the union to deal with if their strength and relevance will be guaranteed in the nearest future. The paper equally contends that expectations in terms of reactionary strategies have been greatly invoked upon the labour unions to swiftly address this work degradation. In other words, the contention shared is that why capital continues to grow, the labour unions should as well ensure their growth through militarised and strategic means. For emphasis, the paper considers collective bargaining process and education and (re)training programs as two critical survival strategies needed by the labour union of Nigeria's beverage sector to repress the fast diminution of work and trade union significance. The Marxist conflict theory was employed as the theoretical leanings to further advance the assumptions of the paper. A total of 12 trade union executives were purposively and conveniently selected from the stakeholder's engagement, industrial relations and education and training department of FOBTOB (Food, Beverage and Tobacco Senior Staff Association).

The paper reveals a number of challenges for the trade union, including loss of membership, reduction in finance, dwindling strength and gradual extinction ensuing with the consequences of work informalisation. The paper argues that the collective bargaining strategy of the trade union can hardly be employed in addressing employment casualisation, especially with regard to the serial violations of provisions of the law giving recognition to every worker, including the right, to bargain for safeguarding their interest in the workplace. Although an interesting debate with respect to the place of education and (re)training programs of the trade union in upturning the increasing trend of employment casualisation was disclosed, yet the conclusion reached in this paper is that not much has been seen in this regard as employment casualisation has continued to incapacitate the trade union of the Nigeria beverage sector. The paper recommends a review of the Trade Union Act and Labour Act as no provisions in the legislation clearly give recognition to casual employment, a challenge that has further incapacitated the trade union strategic effort. In addition, the paper argues for relevant labour departments to support the trade unions in the pursuit of ensuring decent and sustainable work through appropriate strategies to avoid the trade unions being evaded by the wave of work informalisation.

amidst other economic pointers. Nevertheless, what remains incontestable is the rate at which trade union strength has been deteriorating in recent times as workforce casualisation continues relishing the advantage of global changes. Given that the focus of ensuring decent work is not entirely the responsibility of governments, a substantial measure of obligation is expected from the trade union movement in a manner of evolving appropriate policies and strategies that are capable of promoting decent and sustainable work. As a result, escalating pressure is being invoked on the trade union movement in employing strategic measures capable of addressing the unprecedented growth of casualisation that is eroding the strength and relevance of trade unions (Nwoko, 2009). It is in this sense that the apex labour body in Nigeria is frequently being charged by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to rescue the Nigerian labour market from exploitation by giving adequate meaning to work.

The literature reveals many of the disappointing attempts of the trade unions in utilising its programmes and activities in ensuring that the working population derived meaning and complacency from work (Anyim, Ilesanmi, & Alaribe, 2013; Nwoko, 2009; Solaja, 2015). Specifically, Anyim et al.'s (2013) study showed that the Nigerian trade union movement has been largely unsuccessful towards increasing the wellbeing of the working population. In addition, many of the trade union strategies, such as collective bargaining processes and education and (re)training programmes as a measure for addressing the increasing spate of informalisation have not been extensively researched (Adewumi, 2013; McDonald, Bradley, & Brown, 2009). For instance, two of the constitutional provisions¹ that guarantee the right of the working class to bargain and be represented in collective bargaining are yet to be fully utilised by the Nigerian trade unions as a measure for addressing employment casualisation (Jawando & Adenugba, 2014). Again, it is not clear if the strategy of education and (re)training exertions of the labour unions have engendered the desired workplace changes (Anyim, 2014).

The literature is replete with debates on employment casualisation in Nigeria. For instance, a good number of these studies include Fapohunda's (2012) study on employment casualisation and degradation of work in Nigeria, an assessment of the patterns of temporary employment in the food processing industry in Nigeria (Jawando & Adenugba, 2014), and Adewusi's (2015) analysis of the remuneration of casual workers in selected foreign-owned manufacturing industries in Nigeria. However, in the discourse of employment casualisation, there is hardly any attention linked to the strategic measures of the Nigerian trade union to employment casualisation, specifically through the lens of the beverage sector. As a departure from existing studies, the present study seeks to interrogate the contention of trade union relevance and survival strategies in the face of high incidence of employment casualisation practices in Nigeria's beverage sector considering the role of collective bargaining process and education and (re)training programmes.

The chief contribution of this paper is the place of the trade union in the global pursuit of decent work agenda. By uncovering this important role, it is probable to offer a more distinct understanding of trade unions' reactions to workforce casualisation. The paper is sectionalised

into segments. After a synopsis of employment casualisation and trade union relevance, arguments on trade union survival strategies were unpacked. Through the lens of the Marxist conflict theory, the paper explains the assumptions of the study. Subsequently, the different methodological approaches were explained. The last part of the paper presents the data analysis and discussion of findings through which robust conclusions were inferred.

2 | EMPLOYMENT CASUALISATION AND TRADE UNION RELEVANCE

Evidences of developmental changes, worldwide, have seen the world of work overwhelmed with wide-range of work arrangements with challenges for the working people and the trade union organisations (Solaja, 2015). As a result, the trade union movement has been affected by diverse puzzles, including difficulties in organising (Solaja, 2015). Accepting the economic liberation on the part of many African countries has further expanded to the invasion of workers into the mainstream of NSE, with obvious concerns for trade unions' growth (Adewumi, 2007). In other words, the outright denial of NSE workers' right to organise is an important indicator affecting trade unions' finance and membership growth. This is sufficed to argue, that one of the mainstreams of ensuring the continuous growth of trade union is allegiance through remittance of check-dues (Finlayson & Palmvang, 2016). Therefore, proscribing casual workers from trade unions activities, who practically form outsized numbers of the working population, is an important threat to the growth and sustainability of any labour union (Adefolaju, 2012).

The trade unions epitomise the mouthpiece of the working class, whose mandate it is to ensure a befitting workplace for all through collective bargaining and other labour union strategies. With this verity, it is not too problematic to argue that although the strength of trade unions is more evident among the standard workers, increasing informalisation of the workforce has further endangered the bargaining power and strength of the trade unions (Adenugba, 2009). This concern is also a reflection of the right of trade unions, particularly as trade unions' influence is becoming clouded within the broad society (Okafor, 2012). Adefolaju (2012) explains that the growth and increasing influence of employment casualisation have divided the workforce into two separate groups. Accordingly, the classification of the workforce, with the largest cog occupied by NSE workers, explains the difficulty of the trade union in advancing with robust common solidarity (International Labour Organisation, 2009).

The literature also explains that many casual workers as a term of the employment contract are compulsorily made to sign the *yellow-dog contract*,² thereby limiting the membership potentials and strength of the labour union (Okafor, 2012). In Nigeria, there is evidence of the majority of the multinational corporations (MNCs) known with this practice, aimed at discouraging casual workers from unionisation (Fapohunda, 2012). With this indication, the Nigeria trade union movement, previously known by its militarised formation, has been almost perpetually made irrelevant for not being able to

guarantee protection for the working class (Adefolaju, 2012; Jawando & Adenugba, 2014). However, the Nigerian Trade Union Act of 2005 as amended shows a shortcoming by way of making trade union membership voluntarily. Nonetheless, the compulsory act of signing a *yellow dog contract* explains Nigeria's employers' violation of the provisions conditioned in section 12(1) of Trade Union Act of 1973.

3 | TRADE UNION SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

A close examination of section 40 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 and section 1 of the Trade Union Act of 2005³ as both amended provided for the inclusion of all Nigerian workers, the right to bargain and be represented in collective bargaining. Evidence of collective bargaining employed as a strategy in dwindling the excess of workforce casualisation explains how casual workers in the Zambian mining industry were converted to permanent employees through consistent labour bargaining efforts (Lee, 2009). Milner and Mathers (2013) also reaffirm that the bargaining strength of trade unions had a significant impact on casual workers with evidence of conversion to standard employment type, thereby strengthening the trade union membership size in France. Although the Nigerian oil and gas sector seems to have achieved more in terms of the utility of collective bargaining in addressing issues of labour casualisation, there still exists scant evidence as many of these efforts have been constrained by a lack of political will, corruption and leadership tussles among many others (Adewumi, 2007).

Similar to the case of Nigeria where trade union strategy of collective bargaining has had little exertion in redressing workforce casualisation challenges, McDonald et al. (2009) reportedly offer comparable explanations with regard to the Australian public sector casual workers in terms of working conditions, excessive workloads and lack of opportunity for promotion. A more recent study, however, shows contrary evidence (Roberts & Marsh, 2016). Likening the above to the Nigerian case, it is clear that these feats cannot be said of Nigeria's labour unions. In other words, the favourable political climate in the global North can be argued as an important indicator that guarantees trade union strategy to an extent, unlike Nigeria where trade union strategies are constrained by governmental policies and laws (Adewumi, 2007; Adewusi, 2015). While it is not too problematic to contend that the trade unions in recent times have been inundated with the frightening progress of globalisation, strategising for survival through trade union education and (re)training programmes remains one of the major approaches for ensuring continued relevance (Fayankinnu, 2015). Particularly, taking a cursory analysis of the ill-fated work environment the working class is confined to, the responsibility of ensuring good and sustainable work conditions can be inferred mainly from the skills and capacity building initiatives of trade unions (Stroud & Fairbrother, 2008).

In today's global space, undergoing work restructuring, several arguments have been pushed forward for a need to reawaken trade union education and training programmes as a swift response to work

degradation (Stirling, 2013). Narrowing this discourse to the Nigerian context, the necessity for trade union capacity building ensues with the influx of neo-liberal policies characterised with labour markets flexibility (Fayankinnu, 2015). However, there are pockets of evidence that the conversion of traditional employment to NSE types has continued unabated, particularly with regard to trade union dilly-dally in transposing appropriate skills for the desired change in the world of work (Findlay, Findlay, & Warhurst, 2012; Roberts & Marsh, 2016). The literature search also reveals the importance of higher institutions of learning for effective trade union capacity development. It aids in stimulating trade unions' understanding of addressing the tide of informalisation among other puzzles (Roberts & Marsh, 2016). For the Nigerian case, where only one higher institution of learning exists with emphasis on trade unions' training, it is expected that the growing polices of workforce casualisation can hardly be addressed through strategic education and (re)training programmes (Fayankinnu, 2015).

4 | THE MARXIST CONFLICT THEORY: THEORETICAL INSIGHTS

The majority of the applications of conflict, especially within the context of improving an existing status-quo by trade unions, has ensued with improved conditions of work and workplace recognition (Abbott, 2006; Ogunbameru, 2004). The conflict applied in this discourse is, therefore, considered in terms of trade unions' capacity to enforce and change the rule of exploitative employment engagement through coercive and militarised approach. The thrust of the conflict theory traditionally conceives of an organisation as a structure comprising different sectional groups with unlike values, interests and expectations (Yakkaldevi, 2014). The trade unions possess values and ambitions distinct from that of management, which is in negation to the intention and objectives of management (Anyim, 2014; Jawando, 2009). Rose (2008) argued that management desires have always been to achieve surplus through different modes of labour exploitation at the expense of the working class. It is within this context that the exponents of conflict theory consider the trade union as a legitimate contender of management exploitations and other forms of domination evidence in the workplace. Furthermore, employers have always regarded labour as a cost to be minimised, and that the presence of labour only explains that it is profitable and convenient to keep them. This analogy clearly resonates with the argument that, in a capitalist structure, workers are treated less as humans with different needs and aspirations, such that the value of their education somewhat only portrayed them as useful before the employers. However, in the absence of their immediate use, they become insignificant and surplus to requirement (Yakkaldevi, 2014).

The capitalists desire to purchase labour at a very low price by depriving their social benefits is exemplified in employment casualisation practices. Therefore, the continuous deprivation of the working class will eventually provoke them to recognise the oneness of their class interest by stimulating them towards questioning and organising against the growing tide of exploitation (Adewumi, 2007).

The thesis of the conflict theory explains that representative of the working class must strive to ensure continued existence of the working class through improved working conditions. Therefore, what is required of the trade union movement is a call for “revolution” to bring about an end to the political and economic exploitation of the working class. It is sufficient to say that the trade union must be willing to employ all its working strategies to change the status of work informalisation characteristics with features including low wage, long working hours, inhumane work conditions and prescription of the right to association. It is in this sense that this paper regards conflict as an important discourse in understanding the strategic efforts of the trade unions.

5 | METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The Nigerian beverage sector is the domain of this study. However, data were gathered from the Food Beverage and Tobacco Senior Staff Association (FOBTOB), representing senior staff association of the Nigerian beverage sector. The single case study design with an emphasis on retrieving data from a single unit was employed (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). The purposive and convenience sampling methods were employed in the recruitment of trade union officials for this study. Firstly, interviewees were purposively selected based on their robust knowledge and experience on trends and practices of employment casualisation and the pursuit of decent work agenda from the departments of stakeholder's engagement, industrial relations and education and training of the association. Secondly, the convenience sample was employed to allow for convenient participation, as not all trade union officials of FOBTOB were available during data gathering for this study.

The population of the study comprised different categories of trade union officials, with three categories of semi-structured interviews conducted with three groups of interviewees. The first set of interviewees consisted of three trade union executives recruited from the stakeholder's engagement cluster of FOBTOB. The justification for this inclusion was to uncover their role in the struggle for taming the growth of employment casualisation, and specifically how the larger community of the working class is involved in this pursuit. The second category comprised four members from the industrial relations division of the association with selection based on their knowledge of the impact of collective bargaining strategy and other labour unions' approach to employment casualisation. Lastly, the third cohort included five members of the association selected from the education and training department with justification to unravel the position of trade union education and (re)training programmes in addressing employment casualisation in the beverage sector. In all, a total of 12 trade union officials were selected for interviews from three different departments of FOBTOB. This sample size justifies Guest, Bruce, and Johnson's (2006) argument that a range of 10–12 respondents is appropriate to uncover an in-depth understanding of any research problem situated in qualitative research approach.

An interview guide, containing a list of questions, was employed to allow for coherent flow of questioning and responses. The range of questions asked borders on how the practice of employment

casualisation posits a threat to the relevance of the trade union. Consequently, questions bordering on the survival strategies of collective bargaining and education and (re)training programmes were employed to uncover strategic responses to labour informalisation. For instance, while all labour laws in Nigeria cover all workers for collective bargaining representation, the literature has reported an increase in exclusion of casual workers from this arrangement. Thus, the crux is to understand how the trade union has effectively or otherwise employed this strategy as an inclusive approach for casual workers' welfare. On the other hand, questions reflecting on trade union reawakening and capacity development initiatives through education and (re)training programmes were interrogated as response to work degradation. The NVivo qualitative software was employed to infer different themes from the interview transcripts in relation to the research goals. The emergence of themes was further subjected to content analysis giving room for a distinct critical analysis of trade union strategies to employment casualisation. In terms of ethical consideration, the anonymity and secrecy of all respondents were strongly protected.

6 | DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS: THE QUESTION OF TRADE UNION RELEVANCE

For continued competitive advantage in this epoch of globalisation, many organisations have resorted to drastic retrenchment exercises and increased use of workforce casualisation. This explicitly explains employing potential trade union members on NSE terms with outright prescriptions from trade union activities. The membership growth of the labour unions signposts an important benchmark in the categorisation of a growing union, particularly one that can swiftly respond to changing an existing status-quo. For the vast number of trade union officials interviewed, the narratives were captured on how the strength of the trade union of the Nigerian beverage sector has been made incapacitated with the continued flourish of atypical employment. Specifically, one of the trade union officials explained that the increase in rate of flexibility is a signpost of gradual trade union extinction.

I will start by saying that the practice of casualisation has done a lot of damaged to the working-class and their representatives (trade unions) because a large number of people working as at today are no longer permanent staff. So, it is a big issue for us as a trade union, especially when you visit a factory and you see hundreds of people working, and you ask them if they are staff, they reply you there are not that the management only pays them peanut as take home. There have been several instances when we lose trade members. The management do this by compulsorily redundancy and attach the reason to low productivity, only to call them back and reemploy them as casual workers. Gradually, we are seeing a diminishing trade union and it goes on and on like that. So the union cannot grow with this trend (IDI/P9/2018).

The issue of wrongful dismissal, as reported, is not distanced from the penchants of the employers of labour to perpetually erode trade unions for continued exploitation of the working-class. These instances reflect many of the arbitrary violations of the extant labour laws in Nigeria. Majority of the respondents' expressions concern about the dilly-dally nature of the government in sanctioning adherent employers for violating provisions of the law. Interestingly, the analysis exudes a need for a far more regulatory function from the ambit of the Ministry of Labour and Employment for a close alliance with trade union organisations. A female trade union official reported:

We have witnessed severally instances where permanent employees are laid off for no cause in this our industry. The main problem is that those people laid off are now reabsorbed by the same organisations as casual workers, denying them access to trade union activities amongst others. This is happening because there is no check on employers who violate employment laws in Nigeria. The Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment is absolutely doing nothing to monitor this situation and we keep recycling the whole thing. So, we have a case before us where our members are dwindling say on a trimestral basis as far as people are being victims of this unjustified laid off, and remember that the strength of trade unions is correspondingly tied to its membership size. (IDI/6/2018).

Trade union membership strength represents a crucial indicator of trade union growth, and the importance of constant membership check-dues cannot be overemphasised. The argument then becomes how can the sustained relevance of trade union be maintained with the growing number of the working-class confined to casual who are deterred from contributing to the financial sustainability of the union? Majority of the respondents shared these sentiments; however, of particular interest were the narratives on how many of the trade union activities and programmes have been affected mainly as a result of outlawing the largest constituent of the working-class from participating in union activities.

We are not only losing relevance through strength; we are doing also through finances. There is no way a union can be financially stable to address many of her issue when many of the available jobs have been casualised and a large prospective of trade union members are being proscribing from trade union activities. So it is obvious that trade union is constantly ebbing in all its functions. I can tell you that many of our annual activities are still on hold and some we have waved them because of finance. In our industry, we are almost bankrupt as we hardly have finances to cater for our programmes to keep improving on the consciousness of our members. So, ordinarily when there is no fund, nothing can be done. For instance, how do we retrieve

check-dues from casual workers who are not allowed to partake in union activities? (IDI/P10/2018).

The analyses have added to existing arguments by bringing on board the claim that the challenges of employment casualisation are not limited to the individual worker, as the trade union movement is also having its share of these challenges. It was noted that the trade union of the Nigerian beverage sector is fast losing its potency of struggle through continued decline in its membership structure. Most of the trade union officials interviewed submitted that the strength of the Nigerian beverage trade union is far from what it used to be, especially as most organisations now operate in line with the dictates of labour markets flexibility. It was also reported that since employers are now relishing the flexibility of the labour market, several of the trade union members have been captured through redundancy while re-usher them into the mainstream of NSE, thereby rendering the trade union association feeble on many grounds.

7 | REPRESENTING CASUAL WORKERS THROUGH COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AS A SURVIVAL STRATEGY

The definition of a worker contained in section 54 of the Trade Union Act of 2005, as amended clearly, captures all categories of worker—either permanent or contract. It is, however, expected that the trade union should represent the interest of casual workers through collective bargaining, and more importantly to utilise it as a weapon of attracting relevance as expressed by the majority of the respondents. However, the difficulty in employing collective bargaining as a strategy for curtailing workforce casualisation was validated with the position that what practically explains a worker to the mind of an average employer is far from and above the provisions of section 54 of the Trade Union Act of 2005 as amended as reported below:

For me, I think we can only represent casual workers through collective bargaining if only they are allowed to be represented. Firstly, I think it is extremely difficult to say we want to fight for their interest through collective bargaining when they do not belong to any association. There is what the employers called *yellow form* in our industry stipulating that casual workers do not have the right to association, and we have noticed that majority of these people who are desperate of ends means always sign these forms without hesitations. So this is one of the problem. Secondly, I understand that doing this would also mean fighting for the interest of the union especially with respect to increasing its membership base, but in reality it is only when these category of workers are able to come under a framework supervised by the union that collective bargaining can be use a weapon by the trade union (IDI/P4/2018).

A similar sentiment was shared by the majority of the respondents. Although the respondents argued that, in some quarters, most organisations make use of whatever was agreed on the National Bargaining Council as a yardstick to improve the conditions of casual workers. However, this does not clearly explain the casual workers' benefits from collective bargaining as they clearly lack the status of a worker in the right sense of it. One of the respondents argues:

The situation we have in our industry is that casual workers are not entitled to benefit from collective bargaining directly since there are not being represented by any union, but some organisations in our industry do extend whatever was agreed on at the joint bargaining level to improve their working conditions. So, the labour law is very straight in this context, although not without its faults. For instance, the meaning of a worker is captured with the right to association so how do we include casual workers automatically in collective bargaining agreement when they are not allowed to be represented nor given a letter of employment showing that there are employed on certain terms and conditions? So you can see that majority of the problem where are facing has to do with the provisions of the labour law (IDI/P7/2018).

Another respondent shared a similar position that the strategy of collective bargaining has not been effective for addressing many of the challenges of workforce casualisation. It was stated that the violation of extant labour laws where provisions were made for all workers without segmenting the right to association, and collective bargaining has further added to this difficulty. The majority of respondents gave an explicit account of the position of the law that no one is excluded from the privilege set out for workers in law by nature of their work arrangement. These claims are aptly justified in the lines below:

You see all those laws in the Labour Act that you can join a trade union and anything that affect casual workers should also affect permanent workers are all paper documentations. Of course, there is a law that every worker should have the right to association and bargaining. But I must tell you that nobody is following these laws. And how do we then employ this as a strategy when the employers themselves are not respecting this part of the law? The fact that we have not been successful in having casual workers organised is a serious problem for us a union. But you cannot have representation without these laws being given consent and we as a union cannot also agitate for workers who are not organised into trade union association (IDI/P2/2018).

It is clear that the strategy of collective bargaining is hardly utilised for addressing many of the anti-labour policies in Nigeria's

beverage sector. Apart from its statutory legal recognition by law, the categorisation of what constitutes a worker to the mind of the employers further incapacitates its utility among other constraints. However, as reported, collective bargaining cannot be considered a veritable strategy through which the conditions of the casual workers can be improved, or as an instrument to extend membership status to the myriads of casual workers. It was also reported that the need to address the issue of illegal proscribing of casual workers from trade union association should be immediately looked at, as the union cannot bargain for a crop of workers who are not unionised.

8 | STRATEGISING THROUGH EDUCATION AND (RE)TRAINING PROGRAMMES

The trade union education and (re)training programmes possess essential attributes that are capable of increasing trade union bargaining skills and other workplace knowledge. The views gathered from the large majority of the respondents revealed that the beverage sector has a well-structured and planned culture of education and (re) training programmes where members are being trained on international best practices and trends in employment and trade union issues in surmounting workplace challenges. It was specifically narrated that the continuous education and training programmes in place have enormously enhanced and upgraded union members organising skills such as in the areas of negotiation and the collective struggle of sustaining trade union relevance through organising workers in the NSE category. One of the interviewees explained:

In our industry, when it comes to education, I think we are not doing badly. As a culture in our industry, we normally set aside 10% to train our members on how to confront some of the key issues affecting the workplace. But this does not mean we have been able to address all of these issues, especially the challenge of informalisation. However, what is certain is that we are catching up with management as a result of the quality and prompt training and education we give to our members. I was in a training this year that has to do with organising because these days, organising has become more difficult unlike those days when you hear of union and people are readily interested without any constraint to join. So, there was a lot of eye-opener in the training, especially as the skills I acquired has become useful for me in my organising efforts (IDI/P11/2018).

It was also revealed that apart from the annual international training, selected female union members are occasionally sent for local training in ensuring gender equality, and, in particular, to build a collective labour movement devoid of gender imbalance that is capable of sanitising the workplace from unfair labour practices. A female respondent reports below:

For me, I made bold to say that the union is not joking with education and training at all. The essence of educating members over time has not been limited to male as it used to be. These days the union has been working to ensure that women are given the required opportunity in the struggle for a decent work place. Just last week, the association sent 13 female members to Kwara State for training so they too can become abreast with the needed skills. Especially as we know that this trend of casualisation is a threat to us, so we are also deploying our members for training on how to fight back by being able to organise casual workers. So we hope that with time, we would be able to achieve our aim as a union even though we are still behind now (IDI/P3/2018).

Another respondent sighted the importance of seminars and workshops that selected members attend on the platform of the ILO as a way of enlightening them on employment relations discourse. The importance of these workshops and seminars was to provide a balance for union, especially with regards to meeting up with international best practices on employment relations trends. His views are captured below:

Actually, we do organise seminars and workshops for our members. Because we have moved from the period of antagonism and banging of table to the period of cooperation where we are now, and you cannot cooperate with somebody or have peaceful relations with a capitalist if you are not well trained and educated. I can possibly say we have 10 types of training in a year for different arms of the union, especially those highfliers who represent the interests of the association (IDI/P8/2018).

The analyses revealed many instances where the union has invested much in the education and (re)training of its members as a means through which the rising influence of informalisation can be addressed. However, although virtually all the respondents made a case for the robust presence of this initiative, it is not too problematic to contend that the desired effect has not been so discerning in the workplace as the increased use of casual work continued unabatedly with severe growth implications for the union. A significant textual extrapolation can be inferred from this account, implying that this strategy is more entrenched in principle than in practice.

9 | DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The growth of employment casualisation at various levels of the Nigerian industrial and service sectors calls for a robust moderation, particularly the beverage sector. Firstly, findings exude that the trade union has suffered severe setbacks with the rising influence of employment

casualisation. This challenge for the trade union is reflected in its membership loss and strength, as well as the consequence of potential members proscribed from trade union activities. Secondly, the financial strength of the union is fast eroding with the plausibility of engendering a situation that could perpetually erode the place of the union in the world work as a fervent support system for the working class. A number of research evidences have established the fast spate at which trade unions' relevance is becoming weak as a result of the influx of work casualisation, such as McGann, White, and Moss (2016) and Adenugba's (2009) separate studies. However, while McGann et al. (2016) study was conducted in a different research clime, Adenugba's (2009) study investigated a sector different from the beverage sector of the Nigerian economy.

In addition, another perspective to the fast decline in trade union relevance supports the inability of the Nigerian Ministry of Labour and Employment in forming a strategic alliance with the trade union movement in addressing the ascending practices of casualisation. A similar sentiment shared by Adewusi (2015) had earlier reported the docile role of the Nigerian Ministry of Labour and Employment in tackling issues of casualisation practices, while leaving the union to the peril inherent. Therefore, the sustenance of trade union in the face of increased informalisation no doubt requires resolute efforts and sincerity of purpose on the part of the Ministry of Labour and Employment and the trade union. Specifically, however, unless the trade union embarks on proactive measures, its relevance will in no time fade away from the world of work.

The non-inclusion of casual workers in the collective bargaining agreement as a strategy for seeking redress to the challenges of work casualisation explains many of the violation of extant labour laws provisions on the part of the beverage sector employers of labour. For instance, section 54 of the Trade Union Act of 2005 as amended clearly recommends the inclusion of all workers to be represented in collective bargaining. In other words, the narrative of exclusion from this right represents an important indicator hampering trade union strategic effort of addressing work degradation for the pursuit of decent work. With this, the crux is for the trade union to be committed to the principle of collective bargaining as a response to the excess of work casualisation. For instance, with the provisions of the law giving adequate coverage for casual workers, the bulk of the responsibility is for the union to ensure their inclusion. This position is necessary to curtailing the rising rate of poverty among casual workers where a substantial number earns far below the national minimum wage in Nigeria (Atilola, 2014; Fapohunda, 2012). Similar studies conducted in other countries invalidate these findings where the machinery of collective bargaining showed efficacy as a strategic response for addressing the concerns of casual workers (Lee, 2009; Milner & Mathers, 2013). The contrasting evidence for Nigeria, however, could be explained through the canon of employers' exploitation of the weak and ambiguous contents of her labour laws.

Education and (re)training programmes reveal a positive outlook for reawakening the consciousness of trade union for identifying and addressing the challenges of labour market flexibility. Previous studies support this finding. For instance, Roberts and Marsh (2016) and

Stirling's (2013) separate studies gave an account of the consistent and robust use of education and (re)training programmes for reviving trade union organising skills towards curtailing the fast debilitating effect of casualisation on the working people and the trade union. However, for the case of the beverage sector and Nigeria in general, what is still unclear is how has this strategy reduced the unceasing use of casual workers with all its accompanied challenges on workers and the union. Perhaps, the answer to this exposition can be linked to the sparse availability of labour education and training institutions and the application of international best practices in trade union education and organising skills.

10 | CONCLUSIONS: ADVANCING NEW FRONTIERS FOR TRADE UNIONS

The focus of this study has been to re-imagine how employment casualisation has affected trade union relevance and the strategic survival efforts of the trade union to this work degradation. The Nigerian beverage sector's analysis offers a rich testing ground for understanding the responsive measure of trade unions to casualisation being one of the industrial sectors with robust trade union activities in Nigeria (Adewumi & Ogunnubi, 2019). As this paper established, there are a number of puzzles with the continued informalisation of work for trade union relevance. It is evidently clear that the erosion of trade union influence within the world of work is not only engendering grave consequences on workers, but such that it is rendering work irrelevant, giving room for perpetual capitalist hijack of the world of work. As with trade union survival strategies, it can be concluded that the proscription of the representation and inclusion of casual workers in collective bargaining agreement signpost a violation of extant labour laws and posing as a weakness on trade union efforts for seeking redress to work informalisation. A vigorous attempt for the use of this strategy by the trade unions, as supported by available labour law legislation, could allow for a richer explanation of its efficacy towards the realisation of decent work agenda. The canon of labour flexibility studies in Nigeria must, therefore, reflect more deeply on the strategy of collective bargaining for seeking redress to the dwindling meaning of work.

Similarly, while evidence reveals education and organising skills as an effective strategy for addressing work degradation, the conclusion reached in this study is that the efficacy of this response is yet to be evident as a substantial measure in contrast to the increasing number of workers on non-standard work terms. The implication is the need for a refined education and organising skill programmes in such a way that it will take cognisance of the prevailing realities in the world of work for a more effective outcome. Overall, the study recommends the review of the Nigerian Trade Union Act of 2005 as no provisions in this legislation give recognition to casual employment, a puzzle that seems to further incapacitate the labour unions in the realisation of decent work. The government must, therefore, come to terms with this responsibility for international best practices through robust political will to further strengthen the clout of the unions in anticipation

for a decent workplace. Lastly, the relevant government department must exude an important support system by forming a necessary alliance with the trade unions in an effort to ensure sustainable work, by devising strategies to avoid the unions going extinct.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Section 40 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended and section 1 of the Trade Union Act of 2005 as amended provide for the opportunity of all working class whether temporary or permanent to bargain and be represented in collective bargaining processes.
- ² A yellow dog contract is an agreement jointly signed by the employee and the employer, although usually imposed by the employer as an avowed oath not to partake in union activities. This contract always comes as a condition of employment.
- ³ These provision stipulate that every person shall be entitled to assemble freely and associate with other persons.

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