

Labour unions and workers' rights: A case study of the National Union of Electricity Employees (Lagos chapter)

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Abstract: The protection of workers' rights remains a global and serious concern. Despite the presence of labour unions, workers continue to face numerous challenges. In line with this, the paper intends to provide answers to the following questions: What are the major challenges that workers in the electricity sector face in terms of their rights and working conditions? To what extent does the National Union of Electricity Employees (NUEE) contribute to negotiating fair wages and improved working conditions for electricity sector workers? Finally, how does the NUEE address issues relating to contract employment and job security for its members in the electricity sector? The following alternative hypotheses are tested: (1) a significant impact of the challenges faced by workers on their rights, (2) a significant relationship between wages and improved welfare conditions on workers' rights and (3) a significant impact of job contracts and security on workers' rights among members of NUEE. This will be achieved by employing descriptive analysis and regression analysis to analyse data gathered through the use of the questionnaire from 200 members of the National Electricity Employees Union (Lagos chapter). The results confirmed that major challenges faced by workers in the electricity sector have a negative and significant effect on workers' rights, although, workers' welfare, contract and job security have a positive and significant influence on workers' rights. Flexible management style that can positively enhance the performance of the workers must be determined collectively by the parties involved in negotiating workers' rights and an effective and open communication system which must be put in place are part of the recommendations made.

Keywords: labour; trade unions; workers' rights; regression

JEL classification: J01; J50; J83; C10

1. Introduction

The relationship between labour unions and workers' rights is a fundamental aspect of labour dynamics that has significant social, economic, and political implications. Labor unions are representative organizations formed by workers to collectively voice their concerns, bargain for better working conditions, and advocate for their rights (Anyadike, 2015). In Nigeria, a country with a history of labour activism, labour unions play a pivotal role in shaping the employment landscape and influencing policy decisions that affect workers.

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The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) is a national federation of labour unions that collectively represent the interests of diverse sectors and the National Union of Electricity Employees (NUEE) is one of the unions operating under the umbrella of the NLC. Established in 1968, the NUEE has evolved into a prominent player in advocating for the rights of electricity workers, and stands as a beacon of labour activism in Nigeria's energy sector, including those within the sprawling urban expanse of Lagos (National Union of Electricity Employees, 2018).

The Nigerian electricity sector occupies a central position in the nation's development agenda. The availability and reliability of electricity directly impact economic activities, productivity, and the quality of life for citizens. Within this sector, workers face multifaceted challenges, ranging from inadequate pay and hazardous working conditions to job insecurity stemming from the prevalence of contractual employment arrangements (Falana, 2020; Olawale, 2018).

Workers' rights include amongst others; collective bargaining, choice of association, abolition of employment and occupational discrimination and eradication of child labour as stipulated in the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998).

Workers' rights are designed to ensure that employees are treated fairly, provided with safe and equitable working conditions, and granted certain privileges that contribute to their well-being and dignity within the workplace (International Labour Organization, 2019). Though, this is not the norm in all cases, as some employers' default in upholding the labour act. As a result, workers resort to collective bargaining.

Collective bargaining encompasses when labour unions and employers negotiate to establish better conditions of service and employment in order to bargain for increases in wages, realistic working hours, safety and work security (Nwatu, 2017). The NUEE's efforts in collective bargaining within the electricity sector are pivotal in shaping the outcomes of these negotiations and, consequently, the rights and welfare of electricity workers.

However, the complex interplay between labour unions and employers can sometimes give rise to conflicts that threaten industrial harmony. The interaction between labour unions, regulatory bodies, and employers further shapes the extent to which workers' rights are upheld in practice.

While labour unions are potent advocates for workers' rights, conflicts can arise in their interactions with employers and regulatory bodies. Strikes and protests, often used by labour unions to exert pressure and demand workers' rights, have the potential to disrupt operations and impact the broader economy. Balancing the pursuit of workers' rights with maintaining economic stability poses a challenge for both labour unions and policymakers. Striking this balance requires thoughtful negotiation, compromise, and an understanding of the larger economic implications of labour actions.

The landscape of workers' rights protection in Nigeria is complex, encompassing a mix of legislative provisions, enforcement challenges, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and limited awareness among workers about their rights (Owoeye, 2014). Despite legislative efforts to safeguard workers' rights, there remain gaps in enforcement that hinder the effective realization of these rights. Bureaucratic hurdles and inefficient regulatory processes can delay justice for workers facing violations of their rights. Moreover, limited awareness among workers about their rights can hinder their ability to advocate for themselves, underscoring the role of labour unions in raising awareness and ensuring compliance with labour laws.

Within the dynamic landscape of labour relations in Nigeria, the protection of workers' rights remains a critical concern. Despite the presence of labour unions, workers continue to face numerous challenges. One of the primary issues is the prevalence of inadequate remuneration for workers, especially electricity workers. Many workers in the sector earn wages that do not commensurate with their contributions and the cost of living. Another significant problem is the hazardous working conditions and absence of proper safety measures which makes them often exposed to dangers and electrical accidents. Furthermore, the prevalence of contractual employment arrangements of many

employees which deprives them of benefits and protections that permanent employees typically enjoy poses a significant threat to job security. While labour unions such as the NUEE are expected to champion workers' rights, challenges related to internal conflicts and external pressures can sometimes hinder their effectiveness. Disputes within the union, power struggles, and disagreements over strategies can weaken their collective bargaining power thereby affecting its ability to secure favourable outcomes for workers. Additionally, the intricate balance between labour unions, employers, and regulatory bodies can lead to conflicts that impede the protection of workers' rights.

In light of these considerations, this study aims to provide answers to these research questions: how effective is The National Union of Electricity Employees (NUEE), Lagos Chapter, in advocating for workers' rights within the electricity sector? What are the major challenges that workers in the electricity sector face in terms of their rights and working conditions? To what extent does the NUEE contribute to negotiating fair wages and improved working conditions for electricity sector workers? And how does the NUEE address issues relating to contract employment and job security for its members in the electricity sector? The following alternative hypotheses of: a significant impact of the challenges faced by workers on workers' rights, a significant relationship between wages and welfare packages on workers' rights and a significant impact of job contract and security on workers' rights among members of NUEE are tested.

2. Literature review

Conceptual review

Workers' rights constitute both legal and ethically recognized privileges and protections afforded employees within various industries and sectors. Such privileges and entitlements include; safe working environment and conditions of work, enhanced welfare, dignity in work, equity and justice and fair treatment. (International Labour Organization, 2019). They are entitled to fair wages and salaries commensurate with their qualifications and experience, subject to minimum wages and market conditions (United Nations, 1948). Also, they should not face arbitrary dismissal or termination. Thus, job security is guaranteed (Deakin & Wilkinson, 2011).

The electricity sector refers to the segment of the economy that involves the generation, transmission, distribution, and consumption of electrical power. It is a critical infrastructure that supports modern life, economic activities, and technological advancements. The sector encompasses power plants that produce electricity, the infrastructure that transmits and distributes electricity to end-users, and the regulatory frameworks that govern its operations (International Energy Agency, 2021).

The electricity sector serves as a critical infrastructure backbone that supports other sectors, including transportation, healthcare, telecommunications, and information technology. Electricity is consumed by a wide range of end-users, including residential households, commercial establishments, industrial facilities, and public institutions. It powers lighting, appliances, machinery, electronic devices, and various other applications that support daily activities and economic growth (U.S. Annual Energy Outlook, 2021).

Theoretical framework

Human rights theory is a fundamental framework that underlines the ethical and moral dimensions of workers' rights. Rooted in the principles of universal human dignity and equality, this theory highlights the intrinsic value of each individual and their entitlement to certain basic rights and freedoms. At the core of human rights theory is the recognition that each individual owns inherent rights as a result of being human (United Nations, 1948).

Human rights theory encompasses principles such as non-discrimination, equality, and freedom from exploitation (International Trade Union Confederation, 2021). It advocates for workers' right to

freely associate, join labour unions, and collectively bargain for improved conditions. Furthermore, the theory emphasizes that governments, regulatory bodies, and employers have a responsibility to guarantee that these rights are respected, protected and fulfilled.

Human rights theory challenges the prevalence of job insecurity, inadequate wages, and unequal treatment that can be found within an industry (Anyadike, 2015). A commitment to workers' rights enhances job satisfaction, contributes to a motivated workforce, and ultimately improves industry performance.

When the principles of human rights theory are integrated into the electricity sector, positive outcomes for industry performance emerge. Treating workers with respect and dignity leads to higher levels of motivation, productivity, and employee engagement (International Labour Organization, 2008). Motivated workers are more likely to contribute innovative ideas, collaborate effectively, and take ownership of their responsibilities, thus enhancing overall industry efficiency. Also, protecting workers' rights reduces turnover rates. Furthermore, a stable and experienced workforce improves the continuity of operations and fosters institutional memory, positively impacting the sector's performance.

Empirical review

The study of Hidayah and Anggraeny (2023) focused on the rights of workers performing their duties from home as an integral part of labour legislation and development. The study, using a sociological legal approach, found that the needed legislation and contractual agreements to enforce the rights of people working from home were not fully established or implemented in accordance with labour development ethics, especially in respect of payment for overtime work and conditions for leave.

Conducting a study on hazardous work and trade union tactics across seven European countries involving three sectors, Keune and Pedaci (2020) discovered similarity in work ethics, employer tactics and the nature of hazardous work in the seven countries, as a result, unions must develop comparable strategies to overcome their challenges as it relates to hazardous work. However, across sectors in a country, there is marked difference in their established formation and assemblages, power resources and choices of action.

Anner (2020) study was on the extent to which leading companies unfavourably influence workers' rights and conditions of service in supply factories. Trade data on imported clothes sourced from Bangladesh to the United States and the European Union were used and the study found that the lead firms through sourcing and price squash, pay lower prices to contractors therefore, enforcing high order volatility. Thus, in line with labour rights indicators, workers' rights and conditions of service in supply factories are unfavourably affected.

Assessing trade union activities in the European union by comparing temporary (agency) workers' rights with permanent workers' rights in Belgian and German multinational plants, Pulignano et al. (2015) found that in terms of collective agreements there is a difference in the terms negotiated for temporary workers and permanent workers in Germany but no difference of such in Belgian. The study concluded that institutional hindrances have made it very difficult for trade unions in Europe to defend the rights of temporary workers.

Also, in a study conducted on casual labourers and labour union activities in Ogun state, Nigeria via the use of questionnaire, Apkan (2018) discovered that the use of casual labourers by employers has indeed weakened the ability of trade unions to bargain for better working conditions especially increases in salaries and this had drastically reduced the number of members belonging to the union.

Making use of a partly-coded questionnaire administered on Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN), Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company, Okereke (2011) examined the extent to which trade unions had been able to protect workers' rights. The result from mean statistic showed

that though the employees are aware of the existence of the union, many employees believed the union have failed in terms of protecting the rights of workers especially as concerns discrimination, inability to bridge the gap between employees and employers, the high level of corruption among union officials and unpleasant management policies were mostly identified.

O'Sullivan et al. (2015) conducted a study set to investigate two major propositions as regards individual employment law. First, the paper sought to determine if the employment laws are designed to weaken or boost the influence of trade unions. Second, it explored whether trade union officers, through employment law, can mobilize workers and accomplish change in the workplace. The results portrayed that the unions noted that most of the employment laws have individual effects. However, they considered that collective bargaining is better and superior to individual rights. Despite this, since collective bargaining becomes useless in individual cases due to legal restrictions, the individual employment law becomes a more viable means of protecting especially the vulnerable workers. The research concluded that the reliance of most workers on individual employment law, rather than collective bargaining, is an indication of a weak legal framework.

Comparing the structures of migrant workers and assessing how well their rights and interests are protected in two reputable trade unions in the Netherlands and Italy, Marino (2015) found out that as given, after analysing three procedures of union; participatory democracy, top-down and centrally driven procedures, they discovered that participatory democracy seem to be the best procedure since it portrayed a more positive influence as regard organizational inclusion of migrant workers. The study highlighted the importance of the financial obligation of the migrant workers in contributing to the resources of the union.

Though existing literature highlights the regulatory impact on workers' rights, illustrating the critical role of enforcing existing labour laws and regulations to protect workers' rights. However, gaps exist in terms of the ethical dimensions of the actions taken by labour unions, especially in relations to workers' rights which includes analysing the implications of negotiations, and collective bargaining agreements on both workers' rights and broader societal welfare which this study intends to fill. Also, there exists scant literature and obsolete research as regards the workers' rights and trade unions in the electricity sector, specifically in relation to the Nigerian economy. Thus, this study is perhaps the first in bridging such a gap by using the National Union of Electricity Employees (Lagos State) as case study and better statistical tools beyond percentages and mean.

3. Methodology and data

Data issues

The study concentrates on the staff of National Union of Electricity Employees (NUEE) in Lagos State, which comprises 2,625 members. The electricity sector is chosen because it is a cornerstone of economic development. Reliable and affordable electricity supply supports industrial processes, manufacturing, commerce, and services that drive economic growth. Access to electricity enhances the quality of life for individuals by providing lighting, heating, cooling, and powering essential devices and services (United Nations, 2015). While Lagos State is chosen because it is the commercial city of Nigeria, once, the capital of Nigeria, a commercial hub and the largest user of electricity (Lagos State Government, 2020).

Using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula, the sample size of 345 was estimated, rounding the figure to the nearest hundred, the study used a sample size of 300. Out of the 300 questionnaires distributed, 240 were collected, as some of the field workers failed to return the questionnaire (representing 80%). Of this number, 200 questionnaires were correctly filled and analysed (representing 83%). The simple random sampling technique was used for gathering data so as to avoid

subjective bias arising from individual choice of sampling units. A total of 200 randomly selected employees represented the sample size for the research which was conducted in October 2023.

A survey approach, via a well-structured, closed-ended questionnaire is used to gather primary data on demographic information and research questions. The questionnaire was chosen because it is more responsive than other instruments and requires low cognitive knowledge (Turner, 2010). Selected responders got the questionnaire by hand delivery along with a clear explanation. The questionnaire was distributed among the workers in the two electricity distribution companies in Lagos State; Eko and Ikeja electricity distribution companies.

Method of data analysis

The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section one is concerned with the demographic characteristics of respondents. Section two provides answers to the research questions. The questions asked in this section were measured using the 5-point Likert scale. Descriptive analysis of data collected is made via the use of frequency and percentage presented in a tabular form. Section three employed regression analysis to investigate the identified alternative hypotheses, which are; a significant impact of the challenges faced by workers on workers' rights, a significant relationship between wages and improved welfare conditions on workers' rights and a significant impact of job contract and security on workers' rights among members of NUEE. The Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) was used to help analyse the data collected.

Data presentation and interpretation

First, an analysis is performed, followed by the presentation of socio-demographic results. Thereafter, key questions from the questionnaire were answered using the frequency and percentages from the descriptive statistics. To answer the research hypothesis, the study employed a linear regression technique.

Analysis of socio-demographic characteristics and research questions

Table 1 revealed that 49.0% of the participants are reported in the male category, while 51.0% of the females are reported in the female category. In this case, the survey has more male participants compared to the female. Similarly, 50.0% of the respondents fell between 31 -40 years of age. Additionally, the percentage for academic qualification presented respectively for WAEC certificate, OND/NCE qualification, HND/B.Sc. certificates and others are 10.0%, 16.5%, 55.0%, and 18.5%. This indicates that the highest number of participants possess HND and B.Sc. certificates. Regarding the employee's marital status, the survey report confirmed that 60.5% are married. Also, 15.0% of the respondents are in the lower cadre who might be contract staff, clerical staff, messengers, and drivers, while 24.5% are senior managers.

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

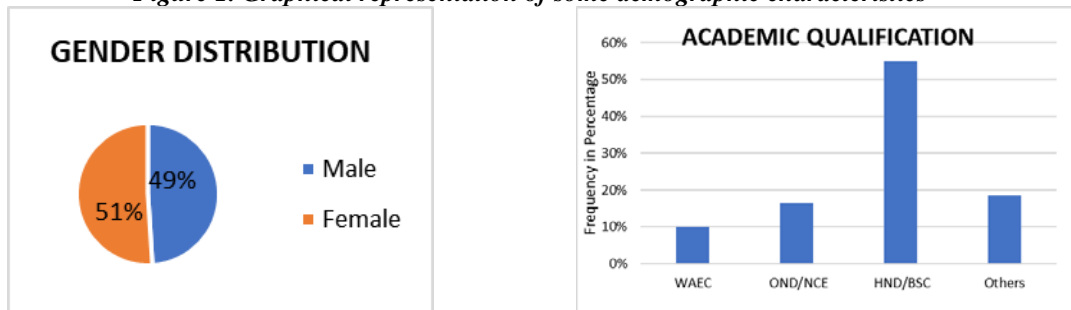
Variable	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	98	49.0
	Female	102	51.0
	Total	200	100.0
Age	31 -40	100	50.0
	41- 50	59	29.5
	51 - 60	33	16.5
	60 and Above	8	4.0
	Total	200	100.0
Academic Qualification	WAEC	20	10.0
	OND/NCE	33	16.5
	HND/BSC	110	55.0
	Others	37	18.5
	Total	200	100.0

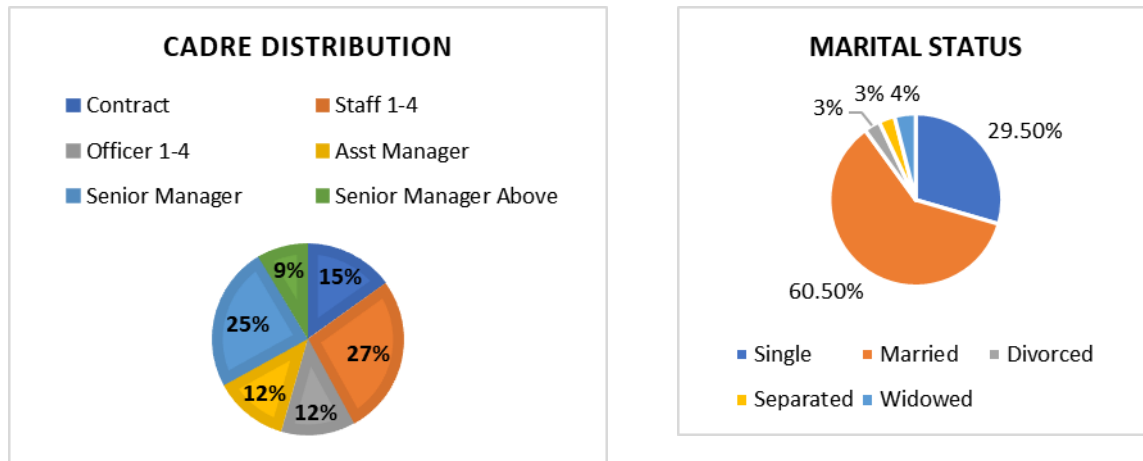
Variable	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Marital Status	Single	59	29.5
	Married	121	60.5
	Divorced	6	3.0
	Separated	6	3.0
	Widowed	8	4.0
	Total	200	100.0
Cadre/Level	Contract	30	15.0
	Staff 1-4	54	27.0
	Officer 1-4	25	12.5
	Asst Manager	25	12.5
	Senior Manager	49	24.5
	Senior Manager Above	17	8.5
	Total	200	100.0
Designation/Department	Commercial	120	60
	Technical	80	40
	Total	200	100.0
Salary Range	# 80,000	48	24.0
	# 81,000-#180,000	42	21.0
	# 181,000 - # 280,000	62	31.0
	# 281,000 - # 380,000	25	12.5
	# 381,000 - # 480,000	11	5.5
	# 481,000 - # 580,000	12	6.0
	Total	200	100.0

Source: Field survey,2024. Sample size N = 200.

Other results of the descriptive analysis revealed that 60.0% of the respondents are working in the commercial unit of the electricity company, and 40.0% represent participants who work in the technical unit of the electricity company. Regarding the salary range, 31.0% of the participants earn between ₦181,000 and ₦280,000 as a monthly salary, while 5.5% and 6.0% earn ₦381,000 and ₦480,000 and ₦481,000 and ₦580,000 as monthly salary.

Figure 1. Graphical representation of some demographic characteristics





Source: own calculations.

Analysis of research questions

To analyse the stated specific research questions from the study, the research employed descriptive statistics that explained frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation.

Table 2. Advocating workers' rights within the electricity sector

Variable	Characteristics	Freq.	%	Mean	SD
NUEE has effectively communicated and raised awareness about workers' rights among its members to the labour union	Strongly Agree	87	43.5	1.81	0.835
	Agree	69	34.5		
	Disagree	39	19.5		
	Strongly Disagree	5	2.5		
	Total	200	100.0		
Members of staff are satisfied with NUEE's ability to negotiate fair wages and benefits to the union considering the challenges faced in the electricity sector	Strongly Agree	58	29.0	2.36	1.107
	Agree	53	26.5		
	Disagree	48	24.0		
	Strongly Disagree	41	20.5		
	Total	200	100.0		
NUEE has been able to address workplace safety concerns such as; the provision of personal protective equipment, ensuring that adequate measures are in place to protect workers' well-being	Strongly Agree	71	35.5	1.94	0.851
	Agree	79	39.5		
	Disagree	42	21.0		
	Strongly Disagree	8	4.0		
	Total	200	100.0		
Do you think NUEE collaborates with management well enough to address a balance in disputes or grievances over present economic issues being faced by workers?	Strongly Agree	54	27.0	2.30	1.021
	Agree	62	31.0		
	Disagree	55	27.5		
	Strongly Disagree	29	14.5		
	Total	200	100.0		
NUEE's advocacy efforts on the newly signed implementation of condition of service have led to positive changes in policies that directly benefit workers	Strongly Agree	82	41.0	1.85	0.845
	Agree	74	37.0		
	Disagree	37	18.5		
	Strongly Disagree	7	3.5		
	Total	200	100.0		

Source: Field survey, 2024.

Table 2 explicitly explains the effectiveness of the NUEE in advocating for workers' rights. For instance, in understanding the relationship between the National Union of Electricity Employees and workers' rights, 43.5% of the participants strongly agreed that the NUEE has effectively communicated and raised awareness about workers' rights among its members meanwhile, 19.5% of

the respondents disagree, implying that NUEE has not raised any awareness regarding the workers' right.

In the same vein, 29.0% of the respondents strongly agreed that members of staff are satisfied with NUEE's ability to negotiate fair wages and benefits to the union considering the challenges faced in the electricity sector. However, 24.0% of the participants disagreed. Furthermore, 39.5% of the respondents agreed that NUEE has been able to address workplace safety concerns such as; the provision of personal protective equipment and ensuring that adequate measures are in place to protect workers' well-being, while 21.0% disagreed.

Also, 31.0% of the participants agreed that NUEE collaborates with management well enough to address a balance in disputes or grievances over present economic issues being faced by workers, while 27.5% of the respondents simply disagreed. Also, 41.0% of the respondents strongly agreed that NUEE's advocacy efforts on the newly signed implementation of the condition of service have led to positive changes in policies that directly benefit workers, while 18.5% of the respondents disagreed. Other results showed that the average mean is 2.05 with a standard deviation of 0.931 which is less than one. This implies that the data points are relatively close to the mean with fewer extreme values. In all the survey revealed that more respondents strongly agreed that the effectiveness of NUEE in advocating for workers' rights can help improve the performance of the electricity sector in Lagos State.

Table 3. Major challenges faced by workers in the electricity sector

Variable	Characteristics	Freq.	%	Mean	SD
There are safety and health concerns that are prevalent among workers in the electricity sector, and these concerns affect their ability to perform their duties effectively	Strongly Agree	100	50.0	1.64	0.770
	Agree	80	40.0		
	Disagree	12	6.0		
	Strongly Disagree	8	4.0		
	Total	200	100.0		
Some primary obstacles such as; long overdue promotions and long period of probation have hindered career growth and professional development opportunities for workers in the electricity sector	Strongly Agree	98	49.0	1.76	0.905
	Agree	60	30.0		
	Disagree	31	15.5		
	Strongly Disagree	11	5.5		
	Total	200	100.0		
Do you perceive that the work-life balance within the electricity sector relating to irregular working hours or demands impact their personal life?	Strongly Agree	86	43.0	1.79	0.818
	Agree	76	38.0		
	Disagree	32	16.0		
	Strongly Disagree	6	3.0		
	Total	200	100.0		
There are instances of inadequate compensation, delayed salary payments, or other financial challenges that workers commonly face within the electricity sector	Strongly Agree	73	36.5	1.83	0.784
	Agree	96	48.0		
	Disagree	23	11.5		
	Strongly Disagree	8	4.0		
	Total	200	100.0		
The working conditions in the electricity sector, and the challenges they encounter in their day-to-day tasks impact their overall job satisfaction	Strongly Agree	57	28.5	2.34	1.086
	Agree	56	28.0		
	Disagree	49	24.5		
	Strongly Disagree	38	19.0		
	Total	200	100.0		

Source: Field Survey, 2024. Sample size N = 200.

Table 3 elucidates the major challenges faced by workers in the electricity sector. For instance, 50.0% of the participants strongly agreed that there are safety and health concerns that are prevalent among workers in the electricity sector, and these concerns affect their ability to perform their duties effectively, although, 6.0% of the respondents disagreed. Also, 49.0% of the participants strongly agree

that some primary obstacles have hindered career growth and professional development opportunities for workers in the electricity sector, meanwhile, 15.5% of the respondents disagreed.

Similarly, 43.0% of the participants strongly agree that the work-life balance within the electricity sector relating to irregular working hours or demands impacts their personal life, while other respondents disagreed. Furthermore, 48.0% of the respondents agreed that there are financial challenges that workers commonly face within the electricity sector, while 11.5% disagreed. Besides, 28.5% of the participants strongly agreed that the working conditions of employees in the electricity sector, and the challenges they encounter in their day-to-day tasks impact their overall job satisfaction, while 24.5% of the respondents disagreed. Also, the average mean is 1.87% with a standard deviation of 0.872 which is less than one, depicting that the data points are relatively close to the mean with fewer extreme values. The general result revealed that more of the respondents strongly agree that workers in the electricity sector face harsh conditions that affect their performance.

Table 4. Negotiating fair wages and improved welfare conditions for electricity sector workers

Variable	Characteristics	Freq.	%	Mean	SD
Do you agree that NUEE has made progress in negotiating for fair wages and improved welfare conditions on behalf of electricity sector workers	Strongly Agree	88	44.0	1.84	0.894
	Agree	66	33.0		
	Disagree	36	18.0		
	Strongly Disagree	10	5.0		
	Total	200	100.0		
There are specific instances where the NUEE successfully negotiated for wage increases or other benefits that directly impacted your working conditions	Strongly Agree	74	37.0	1.80	0.752
	Agree	100	50.0		
	Disagree	19	9.5		
	Strongly Disagree	7	3.5		
	Total	200	100.0		
NUEE has been effective in communicating the outcomes of its negotiations to workers and ensuring that the negotiated improvements are implemented by employers	Strongly Agree	84	42.0	1.91	0.936
	Agree	63	31.5		
	Disagree	40	20.0		
	Strongly Disagree	13	6.5		
	Total	200	100.0		
NUEE faces challenges or barriers in its attempts to negotiate fair wages and better working conditions, and the challenges impact the overall outcomes of negotiations	Strongly Agree	96	48.0	1.85	1.001
	Agree	59	29.5		
	Disagree	24	12.0		
	Strongly Disagree	21	10.5		
	Total	200	100.0		
NUEE's strategies and approaches in advocating for better wages and working conditions are satisfactory	Strongly Agree	57	28.5	2.31	1.086
	Agree	63	31.5		
	Disagree	41	20.5		
	Strongly Disagree	39	19.5		
	Total	200	100.0		

Source: Field survey, 2024.

Table 4 shows the role of NUEE in negotiating better salaries and improving the conditions of workers. For instance, 44.0% of the interviewed participants strongly agree that NUEE has been making efforts to negotiate for fair wages and improved working conditions on behalf of electricity sector workers, although, 18.0% of the participants disagreed. In the same vein, 50.0% of the respondents agreed that there are specific instances where the NUEE successfully negotiated wage increases or other benefits that directly impacted their working conditions. However, 9.5% of the respondents disagreed.

Furthermore, 42.0% of the respondents strongly agreed that NUEE has been effective in communicating the outcomes of its negotiations to workers and ensuring that employers implement the negotiated improvements, while 20.0% of the participants disagreed. In addition, 48.0% of the respondents strongly agreed that NUEE faces challenges or barriers in its attempts to negotiate fair

wages and better working conditions, and the challenges impact the overall outcomes of negotiations, while 12.0% of the participants disagreed.

In the same vein, 31.5% of the respondents agree that NUEE's strategies and approaches in advocating for better wages and working conditions are satisfactory, but 20.5% of the respondents disagreed. In general, more of the participants strongly agree that role of NUEE in negotiating fair wages and improved working conditions has been satisfactory, while the average mean of 2.31 is satisfactory and the standard deviation value of 1.086 (which is greater than one) implies that the data points are relatively less concentrated around the mean.

Table 5. Addressing issues related to contract employment and job security for workers in the electricity sector

Variable	Characteristics	Freq.	%	Mean	SD
NUEE's involvement in advocating for workers' rights has influenced the improvement of job security for both permanent and contract employees within the electricity sector	Strongly Agree	68	34.0	1.95	0.834
	Agree	82	41.0		
	Disagree	43	21.5		
	Strongly Disagree	7	3.5		
	Total	200	100.0		
NUEE measures or negotiations have contributed to addressing concerns related to contract employment, such as regularization or equal treatment of contract workers	Strongly Agree	93	46.5	1.82	0.903
	Agree	61	30.5		
	Disagree	36	18.0		
	Strongly Disagree	10	5.0		
	Total	200	100.0		
NUEE has been in raising awareness and mobilizing support among workers to collectively address issues of job security and fair treatment for all categories of employees, including contract workers	Strongly Agree	64	32.0	2.02	0.859
	Agree	77	38.5		
	Disagree	51	25.5		
	Strongly Disagree	8	4.0		
	Total	200	100.0		
The challenges faced by NUEE in its efforts to address contract employment issues, impact the overall success of the union's initiatives	Strongly Agree	97	48.5	1.77	0.885
	Agree	63	31.5		
	Disagree	30	15.0		
	Strongly Disagree	10	5.0		
	Total	200	100.0		
The role NUEE plays in ensuring that contract employment policies and practices are aligned with the principles of job security and fair treatment has to be improved upon	Strongly Agree	83	41.5	1.85	0.878
	Agree	75	37.5		
	Disagree	31	15.5		
	Strongly Disagree	11	5.5		
	Total	200	100.0		

Source: Field survey, 2024.

In Table 5, 41.0% of the participants agreed that NUEE's involvement in advocating for workers' rights has influenced the improvement of job security for both permanent and contract employees. However, 21.5% disagreed. Similarly, 46.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that NUEE measures or negotiations have contributed to addressing concerns related to contract employment, while 18.0% of the respondents disagreed. In line with that, 38.5% of the respondents agreed that NUEE has been raising awareness and mobilizing support among workers to collectively address issues of job security and fair treatment for all categories of employees, including contract workers. However, 25.5% of the total participants disagreed. Furthermore, 48.5% of them strongly agreed that the challenges faced by NUEE in its efforts to address contract employment issues, impact the overall success of the union's initiatives, but 15.0% of the respondents disagreed. Also, 41.5% of the participants strongly agreed that the role NUEE plays in ensuring that contract employment policies and practices are aligned with the principles of job security and fair treatment has to be improved upon, but 15.5% of the respondents disagreed. Also, more of them strongly agree that the influence of NUEE on addressing issues related to contract employment and job security has been very effective in the electricity sector in Lagos State. This is substantiated with the average mean value of 1.85 and a

standard deviation of 0.878 which is less than one. This implies that the data points are relatively concentrated around the mean with fewer extreme values

4. Empirical results

The qualitative variables used in the model were coded starting from one, then successive numbers were used. For example, academic qualifications; WAEC, OND/NCE, HND/BSc AND OTHERS were coded as 1,2,3, and 4 respectively.

H₁₁: There is significant impact of the challenges faced by workers and workers' rights in Nigeria.

Model Specification: $WR = \beta_0 + \beta_1 MC + \beta_2 AQ + \beta_3 DD + \beta_4 SR + \epsilon$ - equation 1

WR- workers' rights (Table 2), MC- major challenges (Table 3), AQ- Academic qualifications (Table 1), DD- Designation/department (Table 1) and SR- salary range (Table 1)

Table 6. Regression analysis result. Dependent variable: Workers' rights

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.316	0.246		5.342	0.000
Major Challenges	-.406	0.088	0.313	4.638	0.000
Academic Qualification	0.081	0.043	0.128	1.871	0.063
Designation/Department	0.123	0.074	0.112	1.653	0.100
Salary Range	0.010	0.026	0.027	0.394	0.694
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error	Durbin-Watson
1	0.352 ^a	0.524	0.406	0.5067	1.744

Source: Field survey and author's computation.

The regression results in Table 6 confirmed that major challenges faced by workers in the electricity sector have a negative and significant effect on workers' rights. This means that a percent change in challenges faced by workers in the electricity sector will reduce workers' rights by 40.6%. This also implies that workers' rights can be denied when workers are facing challenges. This result agrees with the result obtained by Jackson, Kuruvilla, and Frege (2013) who investigated the global challenges facing workers and their rights. Also, the result further affirmed that academic qualification has a positive impact but insignificant (at 5% significance level) on workers' rights, meaning that a percent change in academic qualification will positively increase workers' rights by 8.1%. In the same vein, the result of the designation/department has a positive but insignificant impact on workers' rights at 5% significance level. This means that the designation where workers are posted will enhance their workers' rights, that is, a percent change in designation/department will increase workers' rights by 12.3%.

Furthermore, the salary range has a positive but insignificant impact on workers' rights. This implies an increase in workers' salary will increase the workers' rights by 1.0%, although the increase may not have any significant influence on workers' rights. The result is similar to studies conducted by Vettrisevan, Rengamani, James, Srinivasan and Poongavanam (2019) and Jackson, Kuruvilla, and Frege (2013) which revealed that workers' rights to incentives and improved welfare are key challenges.

Other results revealed that the R-square of 52.4% explains the variation in workers' rights which is jointly accounted for by all the explanatory variables while the adjusted R-square shows that

after removing the effect of insignificant regressors, the model explains about 40.6% of the variation in the dependent variable. The Durbin-Watson statistics of 1.74 shows that there is no serial correlation in the model, which indicates that the model in the study is well specified.

H₁₂: There is significant relationship between wages and improved working conditions and workers' rights in NUEE.

Model Specification: $WR = \beta_0 + \beta_1 WC + \beta_2 AQ + \beta_3 DD + \beta_4 SR + \epsilon$ equation 1

WR- workers' rights (Table 2), WC-better welfare conditions (Table 4), AQ- Academic qualifications (Table 1), DD- Designation/department (Table 1) and SR- salary range (Table 1)

Table 7. Regression analysis result. Dependent variable: Workers' Rights (WR)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.741	0.259		6.714	0.000
Working Condition	0.220	0.103	0.153	2.136	0.034
Academic Qualification	0.103	0.045	0.164	2.288	0.023
Designation/Department	0.139	0.078	0.128	1.782	0.076
Salary Range	0.008	0.027	0.021	.304	0.762
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error	Durbin-Watson (DW)
1	0.223 ^a	0.450	0.330	0.527	2.212

Source: Field survey and author's computation.

Table 7 shows the relationship between workers' conditions and workers' rights. The result shows that workers' condition has a positive and significant influence on workers' rights, meaning that workers' condition which signifies the working environment has a significant impact on workers' rights with the employers. For instance, a percent change in the working conditions of employees will significantly strengthen the relationship between employers and employees in the electricity sector. This result is in line with the outcome obtained by Lyon (2019) depicting that workers' rights and performance in the industry tends to improve when the working environment is conducive for the workers. Also, academic qualification, workers' designation, and salaries have a positive influence on workers' rights in the electricity sector. For instance, a percent change in academic qualification, workers' designation, and salary range will increase the workers' rights by 10.3%, 13.9%, and 0.8%. Furthermore, only academic qualification has a significant impact on workers' rights, workers' designation and salaries have a statistically insignificant influence at 5% significance level.

The R-square result explained that 45.0% of the variation in workers' rights can be jointly explained by all the independent variables while the adjusted R-square shows that about 33.0% of the variation in the dependent variable can be explained by the model after adjusting the influence of insignificant regressors. Also, the 2.212 value of the DW statistics is close to 2, which suggests the absence of serial correlation.

H₁₃: There is significant impact between contract and job security and workers' rights.

Model Specification: $WR = \beta_0 + \beta_1 CJS + \beta_2 AQ + \beta_3 DD + \beta_4 SR + \epsilon$ equation 1

WR- workers' rights (Table 2), CJS- Contract and job security (Table 5), AQ- Academic qualifications (Table 1), DD- Designation/department (Table 1) and SR- salary range (Table 1).

Table 8 depicts the impact of contract and job security on workers' rights in the electricity sector. The result revealed that contracts and job security of employees assert a positive and significant influence on workers' rights. This means that improvement in employee contracts and job security will significantly enhance the workers' rights in the sector by 39.2%.

Table 8. Regression analysis result. Dependent variable: Workers' rights (WR)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.397	0.226		6.186	0.000
Contract and Job Security	0.392	0.079	0.333	4.953	0.000
Academic Qualification	0.071	0.043	0.112	1.646	0.101
Designation/Department	0.102	0.074	0.093	1.382	0.168
Salary Range	0.010	0.025	0.027	0.395	0.693
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error	Durbin-Watson
1	0.369 ^a	0.636	0.418	0.503	1.724

Source: Field survey and author's computation.

Also, the result further confirms that the level of academic qualification, the designation where they are working, and their salary range have a positive influence on the workers' rights in the sector. This supports the result from Jandaghi, Mokhles, and Bahrami (2011) and Collins (2024) that job security, precarious work, and freedom of contract improves employees' commitment to work. The empirically implies that a change in academic qualification, designation, and salary range in the sector will increase the workers' rights by 7.1%, 10.2%, and 1.0% respectively. However, the level of academic qualification and workers' designation have no significant influences on workers' rights.

In addition, The R-square result explained that 63.6% of the variation in workers' rights can be jointly explained by all the independent variables while the adjusted R-square shows that about 41.8.0% of the variation in the dependent variable can be explained by the model after adjusting the influence of insignificant regressors. Also, the 1.724 value of the DW statistics suggest a positive correlation of the errors thus signifying a moderate level of autocorrelation.

Conclusion and recommendations

The study examined the impact of the National Union of Electricity Employees (NUEE) on workers' rights within the electricity sector in Nigeria, focusing on the Power Holding Company of Nigeria, in Lagos State. While two hundred and fifty (250) questionnaires were administered to various units of the electricity sector company in Lagos, two hundred (200) questionnaires were filled and returned thus signifying 80.0%.

To analyse the socio-demographic data and research questions as stated previously, the study employed frequency and percentages since they are qualitative analyses. The socio-demographic results show that the majority fell between the age brackets of 31-40 years, and are female employees that have tertiary education. The result also confirmed that most participants in the sector earn ₦181,000 and ₦280,000 monthly. Similarly, it is confirmed that most of the respondents strongly agree that the workers in the electricity sector face harsh conditions that affect their performance in the industry.

Regarding the empirical findings, the result confirmed that major challenges faced by workers in the electricity sector have a negative and significant effect on workers' rights, although, workers' conditions, contracts, and job security have a positive and significant influence on workers' rights. This means that the workers have more secure jobs but could be faced with challenges when it comes to incentives and hazard allowance which most workers agitate for.

The study, therefore, concludes that consistent, and yearly training organized by the electricity sector for their member as well as looking at other critical challenges facing the workers in the electricity industry can help curtail or prevent any form of low performance and conflict that might occur between the unions of employees and their employers who is federal government. Furthermore,

the result confirmed that one of the biggest benefits that propels the workers' rights is when they have better working conditions and job security.

Policy recommendations

Management must be flexible in the adoption of styles of conflict management between the union representing the employees and their employers. The choice of management style that can positively enhance the performance of the workers must be determined collectively depending on the prevailing circumstances.

Regarding the major challenges faced by employees, the government should see to their immediate demand as well as incentives and enhanced remuneration that can serve as a source of motivation for them to be more productive.

The government should ensure an effective and open communication system to help employees explain their minds through the unions when they are experiencing challenges in the industry.

Also, the management of the electricity sector should periodically organize seminars/workshops on the working conditions and job security, so as to avoid conflict and strikes.

Limitation of the study and suggestion for future research

This study is limited to the workers' rights and welfare in the electricity industry and Lagos Chapter of NUEE specifically. A similar study can be conducted in other industries or government parastatals, particularly in ministries across the states to cover a wide area across the country.

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