

Legislative Oversight and Governance Outcomes: Evidence from Public Service Delivery in Benue State Nigeria 2011-2023

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Abstract

The public service is vehicle for the growth and development of most of the great democratic nations of the world such as the united states of America, Britain, and China. This is because the public service system, if well-organized can provide the enabling environment for both the private and public sectors to thrive, which guarantees effective and efficient provisions of services like health, education, sanitation, security and infrastructure to the citizens. The public service systems in Africa also ought to be vehicles of growth and development for the citizens of the continent, but this is not so due to the myriads of problems stemming from weak governance, personnel policy frameworks and implementation. In Nigeria the public service system has been characterized by weak institutional capacities and poor service delivery due to myriads of problems stemming from corruption, low employee morale, and rigid bureaucratic procedures. At the sub-national level, Benue state recorded low service deliveries to the citizens in the period under study (2011-2023) due to incessant work stoppages resulting from weak oversights on labour matters, resulting to several industrial conflicts with an overriding implication for the quality of service delivery in the state. This informed this decision to undertake a study to investigate the effects of legislative oversights on the quality of services delivered to the citizens of Benue state from 2011 – 2023. In the study, both primary and secondary data were used. The primary data were sourced from questionnaires, key informant interviews. The questionnaires were administered to the public servants in ministries, parastatals and sampled citizens from the three senatorial districts of Benue State using the taro yemane population distribution formula. The key informant interview group were selected purposively among top government executives in the state and state house of assembly committee members on labour. The data obtained from the primary sources were analyzed using statistical tables and simple percentages. The hypotheses formulated in the study were tested with the aid of the simple regression analysis. The secondary data were obtained from the Benue state public-service publications, labour bulletins in the state, National Bureau of Statistics documents, journals and periodicals. The study found that legislative oversights had significant effects on service delivered to the citizens, especially essential services such as health, sanitation and water supply system. The study made the following recommendations among others for the improvement of public service delivery in Benue state: The Benue state house of assembly should enact more inclusive state labour laws that will enhance employees' welfare with details for oversight functions; Benue state government should ensure that employees and their unions make significant inputs in policy formulation and implementation on welfare policies; the public service in Benue state should be digitalized for enhanced public service delivery.

Introduction

The effectiveness of democratic governance depends largely on the ability of legislatures to hold the executive accountable through oversight based on the principal of separation of powers. Oversight encompasses committee investigations, public hearings, budget scrutiny, constituency representation, and monitoring of policy implementation (Aron & Lawal-Gambari 2023). Where oversight functions effectively, governments become more responsive to labour concerns, reducing industrial disputes and improving public service outcomes.

Legislative oversight is a fundamental component of democratic governance and a critical mechanism for ensuring executive accountability (Fatile & Adejuwon, 2023). Modern democratic systems recognize that legislative institutions perform not only law-making functions but also oversight responsibilities aimed at monitoring executive actions and ensuring effective implementation of public policies. Through oversight activities such as investigations, budget scrutiny, public hearings, and project inspections, legislatures hold government agencies accountable for the management of public resources and delivery of essential services.

In Nigeria, legislative oversight is constitutionally recognized as a key function of both the National Assembly and State Houses of Assembly. The constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) empowers legislatures to investigate the conduct of government agencies and monitor the implementation of public programmes. These powers are designed to ensure transparency, accountability, and responsiveness in governance (Okanya, 2023). The state legislatures are constitutionally empowered to monitor executive actions, scrutinize public expenditure, and safeguard citizens' interests at the sub national level of government. Despite these responsibilities, Benue state experienced recurrent industrial conflicts between 2011 and 2023, particularly in the health, water, education and sanitation services. These conflicts disrupted public services and raised questions about the effectiveness of legislative oversight in promoting industrial harmony and public service delivery. Between 2011 and 2023, Benue state experienced repeated industrial actions involving healthcare workers, teachers, civil servants, university staff, and water sector employees. These disputes were driven by salary arrears, pension liabilities, poor working conditions, delayed promotions, and inadequate implementation of collective bargaining agreements. The resulting disruptions negatively affected healthcare delivery, education, water supply, and other essential public services.

Although numerous studies have examined industrial conflicts and public service delivery in Nigeria, little empirical attention has been paid to how legislative oversight influences conflict prevention, dispute resolution, and service performance at the state level. This study aims at assessing the effect of legislative oversight functions on public service delivery in Benue State Nigeria from 2011-2023.

Statement of the Problem

The public service is the organ of growth and development in great countries all over the world (Britain, United States of America, China and Canada). This is because the public service is the medium for the actualization of the policies of government for the well-being of the citizens. The public service systems in Africa also should be vehicles of growth and development for the citizens of the continent, but this is not so due to the problems arising from weak governance, personnel policy frameworks and implementation. The public service is saddled with the responsibility of delivering services such as health care, sanitation, clean water, and infrastructure efficiently and effectively to enhance the well-being of the citizenry. However, this is not the case in Benue State due to high incidences of discontent and work stoppages

from Industrial Conflicts often embarked upon by workers. The Benue state public service has witnessed several of these industrial actions and work stoppages, running into several months that rendered the public service ineffective in-service delivery to the citizens due to the lack of commitment to the employees' welfare by the Government. This situation of workers' discontent with government has been on the rise, as there appears to be no commitment to welfare policies put in place to ensure collective progress in the possibility of achieving sustainable industrial harmony for the public servants in Benue state. This study therefore investigates the extent to which legislative oversight function influence the quality of public services in Benue State from 2011-2023.

Research Questions

The study answered the following research questions:

- 1 To what extent do the state legislative oversight functions influence employees' commitment to public service delivery in Benue state between 2011 and 2023?
- 2 To what extent do the industrial conflict resolution methods adopted in Benue state influence the frequency of work stoppages between 2011 and 2023?

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the relationship between legislative oversight, and public service delivery in Benue state from 2011 to 2023. Specific objectives include:

1. To examine the effects of the State legislative oversight function on the quality of public service delivery in Benue state from 2011-2023.
2. To examine the effectiveness of the industrial conflict resolution method adopted in Benue State on the frequency of work stoppages from 2011-2023.

Hypotheses

1. H0: There is no significant relationship between state legislative oversight functions and employees' commitment to quality service delivery in Benue state from 2011-2023.
2. H0: There is no significant relationship between the effectiveness of the industrial conflict resolution method adopted and frequency of work stoppages in Benue state from 2011-2023.

Conceptual Clarification.

Legislative Oversight

Legislative oversight is one of the fundamental functions of democratic governments which serves as the principal mechanism through which elected representatives ensure that executive actions conform to constitutional provisions, statutory mandates, and public expectations (Aaron & Gambari 2023). Beyond law-making and representation, legislatures are expected to monitor government ministries, departments, agencies (MDAs), and public corporations to ensure that public resources are utilized efficiently and that government policies are implemented effectively. Legislative oversight encompasses the continuous review, monitoring, investigation, and evaluation of executive activities (Oluwalogbon & Adedeji 2023). It enables legislatures to assess whether government institutions are implementing laws faithfully, executing budgets appropriately, and delivering services that meet the needs of citizens. In democratic systems, oversight strengthens horizontal accountability by providing institutional checks on executive authority and reducing opportunities for corruption, abuse of power, and administrative inefficiency. Scholars have emphasized different dimensions of legislative oversight. It has been

described as the process through which legislatures investigate executive conduct; review public expenditure, examine policy implementation; scrutinize administrative performance; and recommend corrective actions where necessary. In the Nigerian context, legislative oversight is constitutionally recognized as an essential instrument for promoting transparency, accountability, and good governance (Yusuf & Ojoduwa, 2022). However, while the legislature possesses extensive constitutional powers, the effectiveness of oversight depends largely on institutional capacity, political independence, technical expertise, and the willingness of legislators to exercise these powers objectively rather than for partisan or personal interests. Empirical evidence suggests that Nigeria's legislature possesses substantial oversight powers but often lacks the political will and institutional capacity to use them consistently and effectively.

Legislative oversight performs several important functions, including: ensuring executive accountability; Monitoring implementation of public policies; Reviewing budget implementation and public expenditure; preventing corruption and financial mismanagement; evaluating institutional performance; improving public service delivery; strengthening democratic governance. These functions make oversight one of the most important instruments for promoting efficiency and accountability within public governance.

Constitutional Basis of Legislative Oversight in Nigeria

Nigeria operates a presidential constitutional democracy founded on the principle of separation of powers. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999, as amended) vests legislative authority in the National Assembly at the federal level and the Houses of Assembly at the state level. The constitutional foundation of legislative oversight is principally contained in Sections 88 and 89 of the Constitution (Aron&Lawal Gambari,2023). These provisions empower the National Assembly to investigate the conduct of any person, authority, ministry, department, or agency responsible for implementing laws or administering public funds. The purpose of such investigations is to expose corruption, inefficiency, waste, and abuse in the administration of public resources and to ensure accountability in governance (Oluwalogbon &Adedeji, 2023).

These constitutional powers authorize legislative committees to: summon ministers and public officials; require the production of official documents; conduct investigations and public hearings; inspect projects and public facilities; review budget implementation; examine audit reports; and make recommendations aimed at improving government performance. Although these constitutional powers are extensive, their effectiveness depends on compliance by the executive, institutional support, and sustained political commitment. Recent legal and policy analysts argue that strengthening enforcement mechanisms and legislative autonomy remains essential if oversight is to achieve its intended constitutional purpose.

Oversight Instruments Used by the Legislature

Legislative oversight is exercised through a variety of institutional mechanisms:

Committee Oversight

Standing and ad hoc committees constitute the operational backbone of legislative oversight. These committees examine ministry performance, investigate petitions, conduct field inspections, review annual reports, and monitor policy implementation.

Budget Oversight

The legislature scrutinizes annual budget proposals before appropriation and subsequently monitors implementation to ensure that expenditures correspond with legislative approval and

intended development outcomes.

Public Hearings

Public hearings provide opportunities for citizens, civil society organizations, professional bodies, and public officials to present evidence concerning government policies and administrative performance. These hearings improve transparency and public participation.

Investigative Hearings

Legislative investigations are convened where allegations of corruption, abuse of office, policy failure, or financial irregularities arise. Such inquiries may culminate in recommendations for administrative, legal, or institutional reforms.

Review of Audit Reports

Committees, particularly Public Accounts Committees, review audit findings to identify financial irregularities and recommend corrective measures, thereby reinforcing fiscal accountability.

Confirmation Proceedings

The legislature exercises oversight through the screening and confirmation of nominees for strategic public offices, helping to promote competence and integrity in public institutions.

Collectively, these mechanisms strengthen accountability by enabling legislators to monitor executive performance, identify implementation gaps, and recommend institutional improvements.

Public Service Delivery

Public service delivery refers to the provision of goods and services by government institutions to satisfy the social, economic, and developmental needs of citizens. It encompasses the processes through which public organizations transform public resources into services that improve citizens' welfare and quality of life. Adeyinka and Adewumi (2023) see public service delivery as meeting the citizens needs in a manner that advocates a shift from traditional bureaucratic structures to a more integrated, networked approach to public service that prioritizes citizen's participation and fosters service-centric cultures. Makinde (2022) emphasize that a key government responsibility is to deliver essential services that enhance citizens' well-being. This requires well-structured institutions and qualified personnel. Many critical services, though offered free, provide significant public value justifying government existence. Olusadum (2017) describes Public service delivery as those services provided by governments at the local, State and Federal levels to the citizens. Public service delivery can also be seen as "The process of meeting the needs of citizens through prompt and efficient government programmes". This suggests that the contract between government and citizens is such that the needs of the citizens are met in a timely manner, making the citizen the priority of public service (Oronsaye, 2010).

Public service delivery extends beyond the physical provision of infrastructure to include the quality, accessibility, efficiency, responsiveness, reliability, and equity of services. Effective service delivery therefore reflects not only government expenditure but also institutional performance, managerial capacity, transparency, and accountability.

In Nigeria, major public services include healthcare, education, water supply, sanitation, electricity, transportation, agriculture, environmental management, security, housing, and social welfare. Persistent deficiencies in many of these sectors have heightened interest in governance

reforms aimed at strengthening accountability and improving institutional performance.

Public Service.

Orsborne (2022) sees public service as the group of officials employed to help the political executive in formulating and implementing government policies. Equally, the term includes ministries and departments where specified areas of government tasks are conducted. Rowley (2020) views the public service as consisting of governments and all publicly controlled or publicly funded agencies, enterprises, and other entities that deliver public programs, goods, or services in a specific jurisdiction. Shittu in 2020 view public service as the employees of government who carry out the policies of government. The public service therefore is made up of workers in the ministries, parastatals, and agencies. Shitu (2020) further explains that the public service ensures continuity of government; act as a protector of public interest and public treasury against violation by the political class. Spicker (2009) suggests that public services are not simply services in the public sector, they are not necessarily there because of “market failure”, and they cannot be analyzed by the same criteria as market-based provision. They have four defining characteristics: 1 They exist for reasons of policy; 2 they provide services to the public; 3 they are redistributive; and 4 they act as a trust (Spicker, 2009).

Methodology

The research design for this study is the mixed method approach by combining both qualitative and quantitative data. This study combined surveys (Questionnaires, Interviews) and secondary data sources. The survey included collection of information of interest (primary data) by the use of questionnaires and interviews directly from the Legislators, workers and citizens. Secondary data were collected from the content analysis of journals, legislative records, annual reports of the labour unions, departmental bulletins and official records from Benue State and the National Bureau of Statistics Abuja.

Sample Size Determination

The sample size of this study was determined by the Yamane formula (1967). Yemane Formula (1967) 95% confidence level sample size: $n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$ N= Population size Margin of error- $e = 0.05$ or 50%

Sample size: Public servants = 320 respondents

Citizens (Beneficiaries) = 400 respondents

Theoretical Framework

Principal-Agent Theory (Agency Theory)

This study adopts the Principal-Agent Theory. Principal-Agent theory is an economic and management framework that examines the conflicts that arise when one party (Principal) delegates authority and decision-making to another party (Agent). Formulated fundamentally by economists Michael Jensen and William Meckling in 1976, the theory details how mismatches in goals, risk tolerance, and information access yield inefficient or self-serving outcomes. This contemporary theory finds useful expression in oversight studies. It views citizens as the principal who elect legislators (Agents) to monitor the executive and ensure that public resources are used effectively. Legislative oversight serves as a mechanism to reduce information asymmetry, corruption, abuse of power, ensuring that the public services are delivered in an efficient and effective manner to the beneficiaries of the services. Recent studies continue to

apply this theory to explain accountability and service delivery outcomes. The Benue state public service which is the focus of this study comprises several agencies and institutions of the state which are highly influenced by the activities of the legislature. The theory posits that citizens (principals) delegate authority to elected representatives (agents), who in turn oversee the executive branch responsible for implementing public policies.

Legislative oversight serves as a mechanism for ensuring that executive agencies act in accordance with public interests. Through committee hearings, investigations, budget reviews, and performance evaluations, legislators reduce information asymmetry and promote accountability. Contemporary studies continue to identify legislative oversight as a critical instrument for improving accountability and service delivery in democratic governance.

The theory is relevant because public services in Benue State are delivered by executive agencies whose activities require legislative monitoring to ensure efficiency and responsiveness to citizens' needs.

Empirical Review of Literature

State Legislative Oversight and Workers Commitment to Quality Public Service Delivery.

Fatile and Adejuwon (2022) posit that in Nigeria, like other countries all over the world, the legislature performs oversight functions to check the executive arm of government and reduce wastages in governance which is considered one of the high points of democracy. This is a serious responsibility assigned by the constitution, it is expected that the legislative power would be balanced with a high degree of public accountability which is the reflection of modern democratic governance. In the study, the oversight functions of the legislature to scrutinize, and oversee executive actions and any organ of state are brought to the front burner. The study examined the constitutional powers of the National Assembly on oversight; current and new mechanisms for oversight and accountability; coordination amongst the spheres of government. The study revealed that the legislature has not lived up to the expectation of Nigerians in terms of entrenching accountable and transparent governance that will guarantee good governance for the benefit of citizens. The findings further revealed that legislative oversight which is a crucial function of the legislature has been severally compromised and often used as political tool for victimization. The study concludes that for effective functioning, the legislature should be insulated from the influence of the executive which is sometimes counter-productive in entrenching accountable governance since such influence tends to sway the minds of the legislators from the serious business of law-making. Abdulfatah et al (2022) assert that the ultimate objective of the oversight function of the legislature is to promote accountability, transparency and responsiveness on the part of the executive and by extension enhance public service. On the other hand, the constitution vests the judiciary as the third organ inter alia with the powers to interpret and apply all laws in the country; in relation to both criminal and civil matters; disputes between individuals, groups, and political authorities; between state and the federal government in a federal system. It is against this backdrop that the article examined the oversight functions of the legislature and the roles of the judiciary in Nigeria and the challenge it may constitute to rule of law. The paper argued that the legislative oversight function constitutes an important source of conflicts, particularly between the legislature and the executive. Therefore, the judiciary is to serve as an impartial arbiter. The study adopts historical and analytical approaches through the use of primary and secondary documents as contained in published and unpublished materials. The paper concludes and recommends that rule of law and democracy can flourish effectively and efficiently only if the capacity of legislatures is strengthened to address critical

issues relating to constitutionalism, corruption, check the excesses of the executive, and collaborate with the judiciary to ensure the rule of law prevails in Nigerian democracy. Mabala (2019) in his study “public administration system of United Kingdom and its reforms” explains that the United Kingdom is a unitary state under parliamentary monarch as its form of government. However, some powers have been delegated to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The king or Queen is the head of state for ceremonial activities, but all the government activities are under the Prime minister who is from the parliament. The country does not have a single written constitution, rather it relies on various sources such as case laws made by judges, statutory law and international treaties. Members of parliament are voted by people to represent them, whereby through the voted members the Prime minister is found from the party with high share of Members of Parliament. This implies that the legislature of the United Kingdom plays a critical role in the running of government through the prime minister and also ensures that policies of government are properly implemented. This study agrees with Mbala’s position that the legislature has an important role to play in insuring that all government reforms are properly implemented and evaluations carried out via legislative oversights.

Nwokpoku (2018) in his work “Nigerian Labor Laws: Issues and Challenges” asserts that here exists no state in the contemporary world where government to an extent does not associate with entrepreneurial ventures as a regulator, enabler or as a participator; hence the Nigerian government regulates labour-management relations through its enacted labour laws. The methodology used was critical analyses of qualitative data from secondary sources: reputable journals, and official publications. The ‘Non-Dominance Theory’ was utilized as the theoretical framework to explicate the matter of Nigerian labour laws and agrees that the government of Nigeria has well enacted labour laws. However, it was found that certain contradicting issues and challenges are manifest in the implementation of the labour laws and the structural configurations thereby yielding ineffectiveness and inefficiency. Thus Nigeria Labour Laws are inhibited by problems such as; gross violation of Nigeria labour laws by employers, politicization and marginalization of Labour Unions, corrupt practices on the part of administering authorities, inadequate infrastructure and manpower, cumbersome and obsolete labour laws and in appropriate sanctions to defaulters of the laws. The paper recommends among others that: Government, should show exemplary leadership by respecting and observing labour agreements as well as provide adequate safeguard against arbitrariness and other abuse of workers’ rights by employers and adopt labour-friendly policies that strengthen rather than weaken Labour Unions. This can be achieved by strong legislative backings from the house of assemblies in the states. This study agrees with the position of Nwokpoku in 2018 that the government must honour agreements reached with the labour unions in matters of Industrial conflict resolutions, and where there are breaches by any party, usually the government of the day, adequate sanctions be implemented to enforce such agreements by legislative fiat. However, the study did not address the implications of the ineffective labour laws on the performance of public service delivery by the public servants which has serious consequences for the beneficiaries of the public services. Anyim, Ikemefuna and Owoyemi (2011) in their evaluation of the Trade Disputes Act in Nigeria observe that the Act did not specifically remove the right of workers to strike but in practical terms, it is absolutely impossible for workers to embark on strike if all the provisions were observed at all times. In spite of these practical difficulties or constraints and other measures taken by government to minimize industrial conflicts, evidence abound that strikes have been occurring in large numbers in both public and private sectors of the economy irrespective of the institutional framework put in place for

conflicts settlement. Their study aimed at assessing the impact of statutory sanctions on the number of conflicts in work places. In other words, have the sanctions met the intended objective in terms of curtailing the number of conflicts or otherwise. Trade unions in two sector groups: Oil and Gas and tertiary institutions in the educational sector where industrial actions are prevalent were drawn as samples for the study. The findings from the study revealed that the imposition of statutory sanctions has no significant effect on the number of conflicts reported. Besides, government seldom invokes the sanctions when parties breach the Act. The study recommended to make the legislative sanctions more effective and result-oriented to guide policy makers and other stakeholders involved in trade disputes management. This study does not agree with the position of Anyim, Ikemefuna and Owoyemi as applying any legislative sanctions on workers actions will rather escalate the issues in dispute. Workers should be free to express their discontent about unfavourable employment policies guaranteed by the trade disputes act.

Effectiveness of the industrial conflict resolution methods Adopted.

Chinonso (2022) in his study aimed at analyzing the relationship between industrial disputes and organizational performance. Simple random sampling techniques were employed to sample 130 respondents but 115 were retrieved for analysis. Three (3) companies were selected purposively from the Port Harcourt metropolis. Due to the empirical nature of the study, the study was based on both primary and secondary data collected from the field. These data were acquired through questionnaire and in-depth Interview. The 130 questionnaires were delivered by hand to the respondents by the researcher. Despite the time constraints, the researcher was patient to ensure adequate data were gathered from the sampled companies. Descriptive (simple percentages and charts) and inferential statistics (Chi-square) were employed to analyze the data. The study results indicated that there exists a significant relationship between industrial disputes and organizational performance. The study further recommends amongst others, that there should be efficient and effective communication between and among all categories of the employees in the organization as this will reduce situations of conflict in the organization. The study sampling technique should have been scientifically generated to give a more representative population. Also, no justification not was given for the use of the purposive sample adopted. The researcher did not give any theoretical foundation to the study which could have enhanced the analysis and discussions of the results from the survey. Crentsil in 2021, investigated the effect of collective bargaining on industrial conflicts especially in Ghana's public sector Which had reached alarming rates. In some instances, workers resort to strike actions whiles employers use lockout and other methods not approved by the Labour Act or set out in a collective agreement. In Ghana, several heads of institutions and the management of most public institutions make unilateral decisions without consulting collective bargaining agreements. Many structures have been thrown into disarray; thus, resulting in industrial tensions at one point or another. The study aims to assess how effective collective bargaining agreements are at resolving labour disputes. A descriptive survey design was used, and the study participants included members of the Public Service Workers' Union (PSWU) with a sample size of 240 unionised staff members. Poor coordination, lack of shared respect and consultation, and an unfavourable attitude toward union leaders and members were discovered to be the key causes of industrial conflict in the public sector. Furthermore, problems relating to salaries and wages, redundancies and layoffs, gratuities or pensions, and bad working conditions were the other causes of industrial unrest in Ghana's public sector. It was suggested that employers establish a constructive collective bargaining procedural and substantive rule to react swiftly to economic changes that impact workers' terms

and conditions of service. The study topic is apt as there appears to be a growing level of discontent among workers globally. However, the researcher failed to adequately describe the how the sample population was derived and no theoretical foundation was given in the study. The Study did not make any specific recommendations on the collective bargaining method for effectively checking industrial conflicts in Ghana, however this gap will be filled by this research. Atairet in 2022 asserts that every government relies on its civil service for effective and efficient formulation and implementation of governmental policies/programmes. No nation can advance administratively and otherwise beyond the innovative capacity of its civil service who serves as the engine room. The absence of effective innovation hinders sustainability, effective and efficient service delivery in the civil service. The level of service delivery is a function of the innovative capability of the civil service. Innovation therefore remains very vital for the sustainability of the civil service. The focus of the study is to assess how innovative administration has impacted on service delivery for sustainable civil service in Nigeria. Modernization theory was adopted as the theoretical framework. The study is qualitative in nature, relying on secondary sources of information. The findings indicate that there are innovative efforts in checking corruption and truancy in the civil service as well as commencement of digitalization processes for effective and efficient and sustainable service delivery. Also, civil servants are not properly rewarded to be innovative. Furthermore, civil servants sometimes find it difficult to adapt to changes occasioned by innovative ideas amongst others. Accordingly, the study recommends that present digitalization process should be sustained. Also, civil servants should be encouraged and rewarded to be innovative. The introduction of every innovation should be properly communicated to civil servants before they are put to use for enhanced effectiveness. Ohinohi, Oboromeni and Christopher (2017) opine that Trade Unions encounter conflicts in their work environment which are referred to as trade disputes. Nigerian laws have provided legal, institutional and administrative mechanisms for the resolution of trade disputes like the Trade Disputes Act. The study assessed the effectiveness of industrial relations mechanisms in trade dispute settlement. Data for the study were generated from primary and secondary sources. The instrument of primary data utilized includes questionnaires and interview methods; secondary sources include published and unpublished materials. Qualitative and quantitative methods of data analyses were also used in the study with more emphasis on the quantitative method using chi-square statistical tool to test the hypotheses. The study revealed that Industrial Relations mechanism process promotes industrial harmony in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. However, the study found that breach of collective agreement leads to trade disputes in ABU, Zaria. The choice of the scholars to limit the scope of the study population to only Ahmadu Bello University is too limited to draw a representative outcome for Nigeria. Onyemaechi (2014) in his work assessed the basic problems associated with the management of industrial conflicts in Nigeria in general and, in particular, the Nigerian oil and gas industry. The paper aimed at finding out effective strategies for the management of industrial conflicts, collective bargaining, as well as handling of employee grievances, industrial actions, and employee discipline, with special focus on the oil and gas industry. The methodology was purely descriptive and analytical, with major focus on effective and implementable strategies for the management of industrial conflicts. The relevant data were obtained from literature and statistics from the Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity, as well as the Central Bank of Nigeria. Onyemaechi in his analysis revealed that: (i) industrial conflicts began in Nigeria in 1912, with the emergence of trade unions; (ii) the economic costs of industrial conflicts in Nigeria outweighs their benefits; and, (iii) the manner in which collective bargaining principles

are being applied in the resolution of conflicts appears questionable and discouraging in Nigeria. The researcher Based his findings and recommendations on industrial conflicts on purely historical perspectives rather than explore the modern-day dynamic oil and gas sector through expanded data collection from primary sources that capture all critical actors and issues like the NUPENG and PENGASSAN. He also failed to establish a theoretical foundation for his work.

Akume and Abdullahi (2015) opine that the Interaction between workers and their employers is not devoid of conflict. However, they recommend collective bargaining as the tool used to resolve amicably contending labour issues between employees and their employers. Contrarily, rather than have smooth labour-management relations via collective bargaining, conflicts have continued to characterize labour-management relations in Nigeria. Sadly, the present 4th democratic regime has witnessed series of industrial unrests despite the collective bargaining tools they suggested. In their work, they used the documentary analytical approach to examine the challenges and prospects of effective industrial conflict resolution in Nigeria. It was observed that significant among the reasons that have vexed the situation is the unprecedented jumbo salaries and allowances being paid to political offices holders. The other factor is related to government persistent character of reneging from implementing signed agreement with its labour union. They finally recommend in their work that parties should endeavour to respect signed agreement as a way of reducing the persistent labour unrest. Akume and Abdullahi, failed to identify the roles of the labour unions in the collective bargaining process in details, they also based their work on documentary analyses which does not meet the standard for analyzing descriptive research which requires an interface with the primary actors involved to gain firsthand information on the critical issues inform of primary data which enhances current trends. They also failed to base their work on any theoretical foundation upon which they can explain the patterns of Industrial Conflicts established in Nigeria. The study did not reflect the implications of industrial conflicts on service delivery. Odoziobodo Ifeanyi (2014) agree that conflict is an inherent phenomenon that exists with mankind on earth, this is because of man's inherent tendency to guard his interest at all cost. Whenever one man's interest clashes with that of his fellow man, conflict results. However, for life to continue meaningfully in the face of conflicts of all strands in man's relationship with one another there is bound to be conflict resolution and reconciliation. But for such resolution and reconciliation to be effective, enduring and sustainable, there is need for integrity on the part of the feuding parties, that is, the quality of being honest and having the strong moral principles to respect agreements. Using the historical analytical method, the paper analyzes the contending issues in ASUU-Federal Government of Nigeria trade disputes, especially the factors that led to the prolonged industrial action embarked upon by the Academic Staff Union of Universities, (ASUU) which paralyzed academic activities in Nigerian universities for five months in 2013. The paper observes that the lack of compliance with the agreements signed by the Federal Government of Nigeria and the Academic Staff of Universities, ASUU led to the 2013 ASUU strike. The paper therefore recommends demonstration of integrity on the part of feuding parties to any conflict as a means to the resolution of the conflict. Odoziobo's assertion that integrity on the part of the parties to industrial conflict can bring an end to conflicts in the Public sector leaves a lot of room for questions. Firstly, how can integrity be measured to ascertain the optimum level of integrity in our polity which will be acceptable to scholars as a standard for negotiations in conflicts. The work also did not consider a reasonable population for the work as it will be very difficult to understudy the entire network of AASU in all the universities in Nigeria. Akinwale (2014) observes that antagonism has become a feature of labour unions' relations with the Nigerian

government. The implementation of neo-liberal policies worsened the situation, thereby hindering industrial peace in Nigeria. As labour unions and government disagree over the implementation of neo-liberal policies, the relationship between the two parties has become hostile with adverse implications for socio-economic development in Nigeria. This article examines labour unions' struggle with neo-liberal policies in Nigeria via an exploratory research design, involving in-depth interviews and structured questionnaire used to collect data individually from 440 respondents, including members of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG). The findings showed that the majority of the respondents (91.5%) blamed the Nigerian government for implementation of neo-liberal policies. Many respondents (96%) observed some negative impacts of privatization and commercialization, including inflation, job insecurity, unemployment, and poor living standards. Most respondents (99.2%) agreed that their living standard had fallen persistently. Many respondents (93%) believed that labour unions would continue to use strikes to express opposition to undesirable policies of the Nigerian government. The findings reflected labour unions' dissatisfaction with implementation of neo-liberal policies in Nigeria. There is a great need for a substantial improvement in government's relations with labour unions to promote industrial peace and development in Nigeria.

Mayowa (2013) in his study examines industrial conflict and its management strategies in selected manufacturing companies in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study utilized co-relational survey method which involves the use of structured questionnaire and personal observation to elicit information from the respondents. Participants comprised of staff of three manufacturing companies in Lagos, Nigeria. Multistage sampling technique was employed in selecting the respondents from the three manufacturing companies under the study. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistic including tables, frequency counts, and percentages as well as mean scores. The findings revealed that the causes of conflict in manufacturing companies in Lagos State Nigeria include poor means of communicating grievances to top managers, unfavorable economic and industrial policies, poor employee compensation and welfare among others. The study concluded that managers should combine strategies such as bargaining, collaboration when dealing with industrial conflict to have a cordial and productive labour-management relationship. The findings of Mayowa are relevant to the study of industrial conflicts as the methodology adopted by the researcher met the minimum standard in scholarly writing. However, a study samples drawn from three manufacturing companies in Lagos state cannot be representative enough to reflect the entire Nigeria. Also, the style of management in the private sector is significantly different from what is obtained in the public sector in Nigeria, hence the findings and recommendations may not generally be applicable to the Nigerian public service. This research aims to fill this observed gap.

Discussion and Analysis Of Results

Research question one investigated the effect of the state legislative oversight function on the quality of public service delivered by the workers from 2011-2023. On the issue of legislative intervention on workers-government conflict, 105 respondents (36.7%) and 55 respondents (19.24%) strongly agree that the legislative interventions on industrial conflicts resolution were motivated by political interest of the party in power rather than the welfare concerns of workers. Only 15 respondents (9.4%) disagree with this position. These statistics shows that the political interest of government in power greatly influenced the interventions of the state legislature in industrial conflicts in Benue state. This was why most of the welfare agreements reached with

the workers were most times not honoured or abandoned when there was a change of government. The interviews conducted with the executives and top labour officers also confirm that political consideration motivated most of the legislative intervention rather than the concern for workers' welfare from 2011-2023. This position is supported by the works of Nwekeaku, (2018), Mbala (2019) who posit that the legislature plays significant roles in the oversight of policy implementation. On the question of regular visits by legislators to the parastatals to ensure compliance with quality service delivery by workers; 176 respondents 61.5% strongly disagree that the legislature regularly visited the ministries and parastatals to ensure compliance with quality services by the workers. Also 23.74% of the workers from the ministries strongly disagree that members of the legislature carried out oversight functions to their agencies to ensure good quality services are delivered to the citizens from 2011-2023. 10 respondents (8.2%) from ministries and 16 respondents from parastatals agree that there was regular oversight by the state legislature. These statistics implies that the Benue state legislature did not prioritize the quality of public services such as health, sanitation, and water supply that were delivered to the citizens. Such oversight visits could have enhanced or compelled the agencies to ensure that budgetary allocations were properly used to deliver services that will benefit citizens and also ensure that workers welfare were met by the funds allocated through appropriation. This position is supported by the works of Adeyemi (2021) and Nwokokpu (2018), who opined that a strong legislature will enhance public service delivery to the citizens through oversights and enacting of laws that enforce sanctions on breach of such policies. 192 respondents (67.1%) of the ministry workers strongly agree that the state assembly oversight can improve public service delivery in Benue state. This figure is also supported by 58 respondents (20.3%) of the workers from the parastatals who agree that when the state legislature carries out regular oversight functions on the ministries and agencies of Benue state, there will be compliance to set expectations or the performance of such institutions. Where such expectations on quality of services are not met, the legislators can enforce sanctions to ensure compliance. The state legislature has power to sanction ministries/agencies who do not comply with budgetary provisions on welfare of workers and citizens (beneficiaries of service). This position is supported by the works of Orsborne (2020), Folger and Stutman (2021) opine that effective public service delivery requires both that these services are understood as services not as products and that, consequently, public service management requires a focus on value creation as its underlining rationale. Furthermore, this also confirm the theoretical framework of this study which is the principal-agent theory that suggest that the citizens(principal) through the legislators (Agents) have a serious responsibility of oversight to ensure that the executives and workers deliver effective and efficient public services to the citizens. Research question two investigated the effect of industrial conflict resolution method adopted by the government of Benue state on the frequency of industrial conflicts from 2011 – 2023. 154 (53. 8%) of the respondents established that the Benue state government used the mediation approach to industrial conflict resolution from 2011-2023. 168 respondents (59%) from ministries and 74(60.65%) strongly disagree that government honours her commitments to dispute negotiations by mediation. The responses clearly showed that the state government had not managed industrial conflicts effectively in the period (2011-2023) covered by this study, this is also the position of Odogwu, Anyim and Ogunyomi (2012) who observed that the dispute resolution mechanisms in Nigeria are ineffective. This has resulted in the high frequency of strike actions resulting to very weak service delivery to the citizens. Mediation approach which was constantly used by the state government during the period of this study did not have any legal binding

clause or sanctions which was why the state government reneged on agreements it reached with the labour unions on several occasions, especially on wage/salary increases on the excuse of paucity of funds. On this premise, this study did not agree with the views of Akume & Abdullahi (2015) who recommended only the collective bargaining approach to industrial conflict resolution, as this method does not have any binding clause on the government who have reneged on agreements reached through collective bargaining methods over the years. However, this study aligns with the position of Odoziobodo (2014) who suggested that for conflict resolution to be meaningful, effective, enduring and sustainable, there must be integrity on the part of the feuding parties, in this case, the government and the labour unions (that is the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles to respect agreements). This corroborates the view that public servants' conflicts are significantly impacted by the weak industrial conflict resolution mechanisms in Benue state. This study also disagrees with the position of Obodo (2013) in his work "an investigation into the phenomena of strike and industrial relations" where he posited that government intervention into industrial conflicts is justified because government is the largest employer of labour and should dictate the terms of employment relationship between the parties (in this instance, government and the labour unions). This study rather suggests the position that workers be given increased opportunity to contribute more in policies and decisions that concern their welfare and employment decisions as reflected by the responses gathered from the survey in this study.

Hypothesis one

$Y = a + bx_1$, which implies $y = -0.89 + 0.911$ from the result F statistics is 408.497 with a p value of 0.000. Since the p value is less than 0.05, then we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the state legislative oversight had a significant relationship with the workers commitment to quality service delivery in Benue state from 2011-2023.

Hypothesis two

$Y = a + bx_1$, which implies $y = 0.905 + 0.675$ from the result F statistics is 167.289 with a p value of 0.000. Since the p value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the industrial conflict resolution method had a significant relationship on frequency of industrial conflicts in Benue state from 2011-2023.

Conclusion

Benue state governments had serious challenges with the management of industrial conflicts during the period of this study (2011-2023) in the fourth democratic dispensation. The major causes of industrial conflicts included; interference and political manipulation of reconciliation procedures, corruption and inadequate citizen participation, poor human resource policy planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation by the relevant government authorities in the ministries. The inadequate state legislative oversight functions had significant impact on workers commitment to quality service delivery to the citizens of the state during the period of this study from 2011-2023. Industrial conflicts in the Benue state public service adversely affected the quality of service delivered to the citizens of the state, by implication socio-economic development of Benue state.

Recommendations

1. There should be constant reviews and updates of labour laws by the state assemblies and national assembly. The state assemblies should be more proactive in updating labour laws as conditions change globally; include sanctions in labour laws for agencies in default of negotiated agreements; adequate compensations should be included for workers whose rights were infringed in the implementation of the labour policies.
2. The state executive should be more opened, transparent and honest in labour negotiations with workers through a more worker centered industrial resolution mechanism; honouring agreements reached during such negotiations as a binding instrument for policy formulation.

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