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REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS AND INDUSTRIAL PEACE: ANALYSIS OF NIGERIAN LABOUR RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The ongoing happenstance of industrial conflicts in Nigeria, even with labour laws and regulations already in place, has brought up a question about how effective the country's regulatory frameworks truly are at sustaining industrial peace. This study looked into how these regulatory frameworks influence industrial peace in Nigeria, using an institutional look at labour - relations. A qualitative research approach was used. Methods included semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document review. People taking part covered government officials, leaders in trade unions, employers, labour specialists, and workers, chosen with purposive sampling, followed by snowball sampling. The data was examined through thematic analysis. The results showed that even if Nigeria has a fairly broad legal setup for labour relations, it gets weakened by feeble enforcement tools, institutional inefficiencies, political meddling, and long delays when disputes have to be handled. The study also pointed out that there is relatively low trust between the actors involved, protection for informal sector workers is not properly secured, and the socio-economic situation is often rough, all of which play a big role in making labour more vulnerable and triggering industrial unrest. The study says that the main obstacle to industrial calm in Nigeria is not a lack of labour laws, but implementation gaps and institutional weaknesses that block those laws from working well. The study suggests bolstering labour institutions, upgrading enforcement capacity, making sure agreements are put into effect on time, increasing cooperation among stakeholders, and expanding labour protections so workers in the informal sector are also covered.

Keywords: Industrial Peace; Institutional Analysis; Labour Relations; Regulatory Frameworks; and Trade Unions

INTRODUCTION

The maintenance of industrial harmony and economic stability in developing nations depends on labour relations because both social and regulatory aspects show increased complexity, particularly in Nigeria, where social and regulatory dynamics are becoming increasingly complex in Nigeria (Longe, 2024; Onuigbo & Soba, 2025; Yahaya, 2026). The regulatory frameworks that control these relations create essential effects which determine how employers and employees and the state will interact with one another. The existing legal frameworks and institutional structures

and economic conditions in Nigeria create a situation which determines how labour relations work (Aremu, 2020). This paper investigates how Nigerian labour relations function through an institutional study which examines which parts of regulatory frameworks either promote or block industrial peace.

The historical development of Nigeria's labour market shows how colonial influences and economic changes and political conflicts create difficulties for labour relations today (Jacob et al., 2024; Rivera-Williams, 2025; Coburger, 2026). The permanent impact of colonialism has created a system which fails to provide proper solutions for worker needs and rights. The ongoing economic difficulties which include high unemployment and expansion of the informal sector create a situation where multiple parties will likely enter into disputes which require a strong regulatory system to create peaceful relations (Adewale, 2021). The study uses the Nigerian Labour Act of 1971 as its main framework because it establishes the basic legal structure which governs industrial relations in Nigeria. The Act together with different trade union regulations establishes procedures which organizations should follow to resolve disputes and safeguard workers' rights but practical execution of these procedures has faced numerous difficulties. The implementation of these regulations shows a pattern of inconsistent application which results in lead.

Statement of Research Problem

Industrial tranquillity still seems like a key prerequisite for economic expansion, better organizational output, and social stability, though it's not always easy to keep it. Even with the labour laws, and the regulatory bodies that should support them, Nigeria keeps seeing industrial disputes coming back again and again in important parts of the economy, especially education, healthcare, transport, and the whole public administration area. These repeated strikes, the long talk-fests that drag on, and those labour conflicts that just do not get settled, make it look like the current regulatory arrangement isn't really doing what it was supposed to do, at least not in practice, when it comes to smooth labour-management relations (Fashoyin, 2019; Adebayo, 2021).

Nigeria's labour relations system is steered by a handful of statutory instruments, like the Labour Act, the Trade Unions Act, and the Trade Disputes Act, plus institutions such as the National Industrial Court and the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment. Together, these frameworks offer legal and institutional paths for collective bargaining, dispute settlement, and protection of workers' rights. Still, the ongoing unrest raises doubts, about how effective the whole set-up really is, and whether implementation is actually happening in the way the law intends (Yesufu, 2018; Okene, 2020).

From labour disputes over the last decade, there is clear evidence that enforcement lapses, institutional inefficiencies, political interference, delayed settlements, and generally poor adherence to collective agreements are still doing a lot to erode industrial calm (ILO 2023). These problems have, in practice, led to noticeable productivity losses, interruptions in public services, lower investor morale, and a kind of weakened confidence between different players in the labour market (Fajana 2020; Nwuche 2022). On top of that, the informal sector keeps expanding, but the current regulatory setup does not really shield workers enough, so labour becomes more vulnerable and social tensions can easily flare up.

Even though some earlier scholars (Alabdali, & Basahal, 2024; Naidoo et al., 2025; Olaimat & Marey-Perez, 2026) have looked at strike occurrences, collective bargaining, and trade union undertakings in Nigeria, only a modest amount of academic focus has gone into explaining, through an institutional lens, how regulatory systems plus institutional arrangements actually

influence industrial peace. Even with this, there is still too little empirical supports on whether the labour rules that exist today end up enabling peaceful relations or, instead, end up restraining them, and also on how specific institutional flaws shape implementation. This research therefore aims to fill this void, using an institutional analysis of regulatory frameworks and what they mean for industrial peace in Nigeria.

The study aims to investigate the influence of labour regulatory frameworks on industrial peace in Nigeria through an institutional analysis of labour relations. The study specifically seeks to:

i. evaluate the effectiveness of existing labour regulatory frameworks in promoting industrial peace in Nigeria;

ii. examine the role of labour institutions in preventing, managing, and resolving industrial disputes;

iii. identify institutional, political, and administrative factors that hinder the effective implementation and enforcement of labour regulations; and

iv. explore stakeholders' perceptions of the adequacy of existing labour laws and regulatory institutions in maintaining harmonious labour - relations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Labour Relations

Labour relations describe how employers and employees and trade unions and government institutions interact with each other in workplaces and throughout the employment system (Vassiley et al., 2025; Maffie, & Hurtado, 2026). The process includes collective bargaining and dispute resolutions and negotiations and employee participation and working condition regulations which aim to establish industrial peace and boost productivity (Fajana 2014). According to Yesufu, (2018), strong labour relations create effective systems which handle conflicts between workers and management; thus, creating stable work environments which improve efficiency and employees' health and economic development. On the other hand, weak systems generate strikes and decrease employees' morale and hinders work efficiency. Labour relations function as a vital economic element because they enable employers to achieve profits while employees receive fair wages and secure employment and safe work conditions. The essential role of labour laws and regulatory institutions exists to establish fair industrial relations which maintain industrial peace in developing economies such as in Nigeria, because industrial conflicts disrupt investment and public services and economic stability (Adebayo 2021).

The colonial phase introduced wage employment together with formal industrial structures that established the first industrial relationships in Nigeria. Organized trade unionism emerged in the 1930s and 1940s, particularly in sectors such as railways, mining, and civil service (Otobo, 2000). The 1945 general strike served as a major achievement because it enhanced union activities while workers developed new political knowledge.

The Labour Act and Trade Disputes Act and Trade Unions Act alongside with Nigeria Labour Congress and National Industrial Court of Nigeria established new legal and institutional frameworks which expanded labour relations after Nigeria's independence in 1960 (Abdul - Raza, 2025; Jalloh, 2026).

Regulatory Frameworks Governing Labour Relations in Nigeria

The legal and institutional systems of Nigeria, has established regulations to control labour relations and protect workers' rights to maintain industrial peace (Arthur–Jolasinmi., & Abusomwan, 2025; Udeobasi et al., 2026). The frameworks establish appropriate duties for employers and employees and trade unions and government bodies to carry out their duties of maintaining workplace order and handling conflicts. The Labour Act of 1974 serves as the primary law, which governs employment conditions, that includes working hours and wages, contractual agreements, leave entitlement policies, and employee termination methods, to create equitable standards that protect workers from exploitation (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). The Trade Unions Act provides legal recognition for trade union formation and activities, enabling workers to engage in collective bargaining and representation (Otobo, 2000). The Nigeria Labour Congress and the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria function as industrial relations organizations through this system. The Trade Disputes Act establishes procedures for resolving labour conflicts through mediation, conciliation, arbitration, and adjudication via the National Industrial Court of Nigeria, which was created to strengthen labour justice and ensure orderly dispute resolution (Fashoyin, 2019).

The frameworks aimed at achieving industrial harmony through their requirements which mandate labour standards compliance and workers' rights protection and efficient dispute resolution processes. The system faces multiple challenges which include weak enforcement and political interference and corrupt practices and bureaucratic delays and failure to implement existing agreements according to Okene (2020). Institutional weaknesses, including limited autonomy and inadequate funding, further reduce their effectiveness, while delayed judicial processes often discourage formal resolution of disputes, leading to strikes and industrial actions (Nwuche, 2022).

Nigerian labour challenges exist because of insufficient law implementation combined with institutional inefficiencies which create a gap between labour regulation goals and actual outcomes. The situation requires development of better enforcement systems and enhancement of institutional capabilities and establishment of transparent labour management practices to maintain industrial harmony.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Institutional Theory, Social Contract Theory, and Conflict Theory as its theoretical framework to explain labour relations, and regulatory systems in Nigeria.

Institutional Theory

Institutional Theory shows that social and organizational behavior develops through established rules and norms and organizational structures which governed social interactions according to existing laws and policies (Scott, 2008). Labour relations institutions which include labour ministries and industrial courts and trade unions and labour laws function to create industrial peace through their roles in governing employer-employee interactions.

Dispute resolutions and labour law enforcement in Nigeria are handled by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, and the National Industrial Court and trade unions. Corruption and weak capacity and political interference and poor implementation reduced their ability to function which results in industrial disputes (Fajana, 2020). The theory demonstrates that institutional deficiencies create obstacles which prevent industrial harmony maintenance.

Social Contract Theory

Social Contract Theory asserts that social order functions through unspoken agreements which people make with their ruling powers, while legitimate governance exists through the protection of people's rights and their well-being (Rousseau, 1762). The theory explains how these three groups of people are connected to work which include employers and employees and government organizations. They share common expectations which exist in formal labour laws and signed agreements. Organizations lose trust when they break agreements through their failure to implement policies which lead to wage delays and collective agreement violations, which frequently result in strikes and industrial unrest (Adebayo, 2021). The theory explains how stakeholder obligation breakdowns result in labour conflicts.

Conflict Theory

Conflict Theory, which Karl Marx developed, represents society as a conflict between groups who struggle to obtain political power and control economic resources (Marx & Engels, 1848). Employers want to increase their profits but their objectives are in frequent conflict with employees who wants higher wages and better working conditions and more social security. Industrial disputes in Nigeria emerged from three main causes which include wage disputes and unsafe working environments and dissatisfaction with company policies. Trade unions used strikes and protests as their main response to workplace conflicts which show the fundamental unfairness in the relationship between workers and their employers (Fashoyin, 2019). This theory explains why industrial conflict continues to exist even when regulatory systems operate within workplaces.

Institutional Actors in Nigerian Labour Relations

The process of labour relations in Nigeria requires multiple institutional actors that will work together to maintain industrial peace and control workplace operations. The system includes government agencies and company owners and trade unions and community groups. The government establishes itself as the main authority through its development of policies and its execution of labour regulations and its handling of disputes through institutions like the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment and the National Industrial Court of Nigeria. The organization operates as a public sector employer while it also functions as a labour relations authority which establishes rules and participates in workplace relations (Fashoyin 2019).

The responsibilities of employers include delivering just salaries and maintaining hazard-free workplaces and meeting all required employment standards while they negotiate via employers' associations. The parties engaged in the conflict face problems when they fail to meet their respective responsibilities outlined in the established agreements (Yesufu 2018). Trade unions use collective bargaining and advocacy and industrial action to protect the rights of workers. The NLC and the ASUU and the TUC serve as major unions who develop better worker conditions through their negotiations and who shape labour policies (Otobo 2000). Civil society organizations and the media also support labour relations by promoting awareness and monitoring policies and advocating for social justice and workers' rights (Adebayo 2021). The success of labour relations programs relies on institutional actors who must work together to achieve agreements through discussions and maintain established rules.

Challenges Confronting Labour Relations

The Nigeria labour relations system faces multiple difficulties which prevent peaceful industrial relations and efficient management of work environments. The problem exists because labour laws lacked proper enforcement when it comes to matters of corruption, insufficient funding, and weak institutional capabilities, these apparently decreased regulatory powers of existing systems

(Okene, 2020). These problems exist because informal sector workers, who do not join unions, faced inadequate protection against exploitation, inspite of low wages, and hazardous working environments (ILO, 2023). The system prevents workers from using formal disagreement resolution systems while making it harder for them to follow workplace regulations.

The government used its power to influence labour relations through control over unions' management and bargaining talks, which damages institutional independence and hinders negotiations between labour and management (Fajana, 2014). The delayed execution of accords results in numerous industrial disputes when organizations fail to implement their commitments on time. The rise of informal work makes it harder to enforce regulations because numerous employees work without official employment contracts and pension plans and social security benefits, which heightens their danger and decreases the capacity to enforce rules (ILO, 2023). The combination of economic instability and inflationary pressures and rising unemployment and insufficient wages creates a major base for workers to start industrial actions through strikes and protests, which they use to fight for better working conditions (Nwuche, 2022).

Conflict and Industrial Peace

Industrial conflict describes disputes which emerged between employers and employees as a result of wages, work conditions, job security, and lack of implementation of organizational policies. Industrial peace exists when labour and management maintain stable relationships through their cooperative partnerships which build mutual trust between them (Adebayo, 2021).

The United States faces industrial conflicts because of various reasons which include organizations failure to implement collective agreements, their late payment of salaries, unsafe work environments, their broken trust with labour unions and their ineffective methods to handle disputes (Fashoyin, 2019). Economic hardship and inflation further worsen worker dissatisfaction and increase the frequency of strikes and protests. The Academic Staff Union of Universities conducted multiple strikes because of funding problems and welfare issues and their failure to implement agreements, which resulted in academic work disruptions that harmed educational progress (Okene, 2020). The Nigeria Labour Congress initiated nationwide protests against fuel subsidy removal and wage policies, which demonstrated how economic reforms lead to industrial unrest when people view them as unjust.

The path to industrial peace requires organizations to use three main methods which include productive communication, open collective bargaining processes and complete agreement implementation, along with their need for robust labour organizations. The maintenance of industrial peace between parties requires the development of trust and accountability and the complete execution of labour regulations (Yesufu, 2018).

Comparative Perspectives

The capacity of institutions and its economic structure and political environment determine how its labour relations practices are implemented. For example. In South Africa, India and Brazil the government have established new regulations to enhance the ability of labour laws to resolve disputes while providing better safeguards for their workers. The constitutional framework of South Africa provides strong protections for labour rights which enable collective bargaining while the Labour Relations Act requires employers and unions to negotiate before they can start industrial action, which helps to resolve disputes in a more effective way than they do in Nigeria (Bendix, 2019).India has established special labour courts together with arbitration systems to resolve disputes, yet the country continues to struggle with its informal workforce and enforcement

challenges that resemble the issues faced by Nigeria (Sharma, 2020). Brazil has pursued reforms that allow workers to maintain their job security while employers gain the ability to adapt to changing business conditions.

Also, Nigeria can achieve better industrial relations through stronger institutional independence together with improved enforcement abilities and active social dialogue and effective teamwork among government entities and business leaders and labour unions.

Impact of Socio-Political Dynamics

Nigerian labour relations undergo major transformation through the impact of existing socio-political situations. The government implements wage regulations and fuel subsidy programs and tax policies and privatization initiatives and public sector changes which trigger labour union and worker protests when these measures are perceived as detrimental (Adebayo 2021).

The political system remains unstable while the government operates with insufficient power which damages labour organizations by enforcing unpredictable work regulations and preventing the execution of signed contracts and letting government officials intervene in worker disputes (Fajana 2014). Public perception together with media coverage creates a strong impact on labour relations because media outlets use their power to shape public view and create awareness of complaints which helps them build their base during labour strikes. Workers receive less public support when they face negative media representations while positive media coverage helps labour movements grow stronger (Nwuche 2022). Social media platforms have enabled more people to become active in labour matters while they learn about workplace problems which has resulted in higher public awareness and worker organization.

The current socio-political situation in Nigeria kind of acts as the main thing that sets up why industrial conflicts happen, and also what happens after they erupt. A lot of recent labour disagreements have shown, in a very direct way, how political choices can end up steering industrial relations. Like take the removal of fuel subsidies, and then the knock-on increase in the cost of living. That move, generated broad pushback from organized labour, mostly through the Nigeria Labour Congress, and the Trade Union Congress, leading to protests across the country and threats of strikes. There's also the recurring back-and-forth between the Federal Government and unions in universities, particularly the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), which has often been tied to delays in putting into practice what was already negotiated, plus slow funding determinations and other policy moves. In the health sector too, industrial actions by healthcare staff have been affected by how government handles pay, welfare packages and day to day working circumstances, kind of like a chain reaction. Taken together, these cases basically point to the fact that political and policy decisions mould labour grievances, nudge collective action, and shape whether industrial peace can really hold in Nigeria.

Pathways for Reform and Improvement

Experts in academia and public policy advocate various changes to improve workforce relations and achieve lasting industrial harmony in Nigeria. The main proposal suggests that labour institutions should receive better funding and operational independence together with enhanced administrative capabilities to boost their enforcement and dispute resolution efficiency (Okene, 2020). In accordance to (Fashoyin 2019), the timely implementation of collective agreements stands as a crucial reform because compliance with these agreements establishes trust while decreasing instances of industrial disputes. The establishment of effective stakeholder collaboration between government bodies and employers together with trade unions and civil

society organizations needs to occur because this process establishes trust while enabling shared decision-making through dialogue (Yesufu, 2018). The recommended reforms include three areas which need to be addressed: informal employment, better protection for at-risk workers, and modernizing dispute resolution methods through improved labour education and judicial processes.

The research shows that regulatory frameworks and institutional performance together with socio-political factors and stakeholder relationships create the labour relations framework which determines industrial peacefulness in Nigeria. The industrial harmony of the country faces multiple challenges because existing laws and institutions fail to enforce regulations when political forces interfere and workers use informal employment and disputes take time to resolve while parties do not fulfil their agreements. Comparative research demonstrates that improved institutional frameworks together with effective social dialogue practices result in better industrial peace outcomes but research still needs to determine how well Nigeria's labour regulatory body's function. The research needs to continue because it provides evidence-based solutions which create permanent industrial peace through sustainable reforms.

Empirical Review

The research studies on labour relationships, regulatory systems and industrial relations in Nigeria argue that, institutional problems and implementation problems have persistently hindered progress.

Fashoyin (2019) found weak enforcement of labour laws and political interference significantly undermine regulatory effectiveness it has led to industrial conflicts because existing laws fail to resolve the problem. Adebayo (2021) found that poor implementation of collective bargaining agreements has eroded trust between government and labour unions which results in frequent strikes and industrial unrest.

Okene (2020), explained that, workers used industry action because dispute resolution systems take too long to solve their problems. On the other hand, inefficient processes create obstacles to their work. In his historical study of Nigeria's labour relations system, Otobo (2000), showed that the British colonial system together with political interference and inadequate institutional control has created permanent disruptions to industrial peace.

Nwuche (2022), identified corruption and weak enforcement capability, and non-compliance with labour standards as barriers that prevent labour regulatory frameworks from achieving their goal of maintaining industrial peace. The International Labour Organization (ILO) 2023 research shows that countries with strong labour institutions and effective dispute resolution systems experienced fewer industrial conflicts while achieving higher productivity rates.

The existing literature establishes that Nigeria has created labour laws and institutional frameworks, yet their implementation suffers from insufficient execution together with inadequate enforcement and institutional shortcomings. Existing research primarily studies strikes and union activities and collective bargaining processes, with research gaps existing because scholars have not conducted complete institutional evaluations of regulatory systems which govern industrial relations.

METHODOLOGY

This research basically used a qualitative design, to sort of dig deeper into how regulatory frameworks affect industrial calm within Nigeria labour - relations system. The qualitative path was seen as fitting, because it allowed a kind of probing into stakeholders' experiences, views, and

interpretations about labour regulation, conflict settlement, and how well institutions actually perform.

For the data, the study relied on semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and document examination. The semi-structured interviews were done with important stakeholders, like officials from the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, people from trade unions, employers' associations, labour law practitioners, industrial relations scholars, and officials from other related regulatory bodies. Then FGDs were arranged with workers drawn from certain public and private sector organizations, to help bring in different perspectives on labour relations, and the everyday ways workplace issues are handled.

The participants were chosen using purposive sampling and snowball sampling, kind of together. Purposive sampling was used to make sure the right individuals were included, those with deep understanding and substantial experience in labour relations, while snowball sampling helped to reach more participants who had very specific knowledge about industrial relations and labour regulation.

Document analysis complemented the main data by looking at different legislative and policy materials, for example the Labour Act, Trade Unions Act, Trade Disputes Act, National Industrial Court Act, collective bargaining agreements, government reports, and publications from the International Labour Organization ILO, and also the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment.

The data that was gathered, was then analyzed through thematic analysis, basically. Interview transcripts, focus group discussions, and documentary evidence were coded in a systematic way, then grouped into categories, so as to surface recurring themes and noticeable patterns around regulatory effectiveness, how institutions actually perform, enforcement challenges, stakeholder trust, the dispute resolution mechanisms in practice, and industrial peace too. Using triangulation from several sources improved the credibility, and trustworthiness of what the study found.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section provides both the research results and their analysis regarding how regulatory systems affect labour relations in Nigeria to maintain industrial harmony. The findings are organized in line with the research objectives and questions (i only noticed research objectives) to ensure coherence and relevance. The discussion employs qualitative data to generate emerging themes, which researchers relate to existing literature and theoretical frameworks to explain how labour regulatory systems promote industrial harmony within organizations.

Presentation of Findings

The results are presented according to thematic areas, derived from interview transcripts, focus group discussions and document analysis. The themes reflect participants lived, institutional perspectives and the actual conditions of labour relations within their specific context. The discussion used direct quotations and narrative excerpts from respondents to show important perspectives.

Theme 1: Effectiveness of Regulatory Frameworks

The findings reveal differing opinions on the effectiveness of labour regulatory framework, including the Labour Act, Trade Unions Act, and Trade Disputes Act. Participants confirmed that complete legal frameworks exist yet they expressed doubts about enforcement effectiveness and compliance levels. A trade union respondent noted: "The laws are there, but implementation is the real problem; employers and even government agencies often ignore agreements."

Participants also pointed out three specific problems that left enforcement gaps, like bureaucratic processing times institutional inefficiencies and the restricted powers of relevant labour institutions. One participant said, "Most disputes remain unresolved for months because the procedures are too slow, and agencies often lack the authority to compel compliance." Another respondent noted that, "Even when agreements are reached, implementation is delayed, because the institutions that handle enforcement have limited capacity and influence." Likewise, a trade union representative mentioned that "Workers get frustrated when complaints move through several layers of bureaucracy without concrete action, which makes work stoppages seem like the only effective option."

These institutional shortcomings really did end up undermining industrial peace in the workplace. Basically, they weakened confidence in formal dispute resolution mechanisms and then, in a domino effect, labour conflicts could escalate into strikes and other kinds of industrial action. From an Institutional Theory perspective, the findings suggest that labour regulations work (or don't) not just because formal rules exist, but also because institutions have the ability to put those rules into practice in a consistent way. If enforcement agencies lack autonomy, resources, or even the right authority, then those regulatory frameworks become less effective at influencing how people behave at work.

Conflict Theory also helps, because it argues that these weak spots tend to generate power imbalances between employers and employees as well as between them and the state. And when that happens, tensions rise and the chances of industrial disputes increase. So, overall, the findings point to institutional weaknesses as a direct contributor to recurring labour conflicts: trust in the regulatory processes drops and the dispute resolution mechanisms do not work as effectively. These findings are also in line with Fashoyin (2019), who said that delays in enforcement and institutional constraints still stand as major obstacles for effective labour relations and sustainable industrial peace, especially in Nigeria.

Theme 2: Roles of Institutional Actors

The research showed that multiple institutional players control labour disputes in Nigeria as both government agencies and employers and trade unions work together to fulfil their separate but related responsibilities. legal authority mandates government authorities to manage disputes employers to confirm with labour regulations, and trade unions to protect the right of their members. The results reveal that the three organizations involved have varying levels of collaboration. The parties involved in negotiations maintain some level of teamwork while they primarily engaged in conflict and distrust during wage and policy disputes. A government official stated: "We try to mediate, but sometimes both unions and employers are unwilling to compromise." The research confirms earlier studies (Fajana, 2014; Adebayo, 2021) which demonstrate that industrial peace exists because trust between stakeholders stays weak.

Theme 3: Challenges Faced by Workers in the Informal Sector

The research reveals that informal sector workers faced complete exclusion from protection in all workplace. majority of participants found that informal workers operate without contracts and social security benefits and dispute-resolution systems. One participant explained that informal sector workers lack both union support and government oversight because they have to navigate their work environment alone.

The existence of this situation leads to workers' exploitation and dangerous workplace conditions and hidden labour disputes which are not documented. The findings reveal, informal employment growth decreases regulatory capability while it creates more difficulties for labour management in

Nigeria. The observations match ILO (2023) data which shows the relationship between informal work and labour vulnerabilities which exist in developing nations.

Theme 4: Socio-Political Influences on Labour Relations

The research results show that socio-political elements have major impacts on labour relations in Nigeria. Workers experience industrial disputes because government policies and political changes and economic reforms provide conditions that are detrimental to their interests. The participants explained that the media and public perceptions have major impacts on how labour disputes grow. Social media, for instance, serves as an effective platform which enables demonstrators to gather support during strikes and protest actions. A labour expert stated that political choices determine the speed of dispute resolutions through their power to escalate or resolve conflicts. university strikes and labour protests have a direct connection with political decisions which leads to industrial disputes.

Theme 5: Recommendations for Reform and Improvement

Participants put forward a few reforms to boost regulatory effectiveness and maintain industrial peace, and, in a pretty direct way, these suggestions were tied to the problems surfaced in the study. With what the research showed about bureaucratic delays, enforcement that doesn't really bite, and institutional inefficiencies, respondents basically said labour institutions need to be strengthened, and negotiated agreements should be implemented on time, no endless hanging. As one person put it, "Many disputes would not escalate if agreements were implemented when due." On top of that, because people were worrying about dispute-resolution processes that drag on too long, they also pushed for a judiciary that works more effectively—one that can handle labour disputes promptly and fairly.

Also, the finding that political interference along with limited institutional powers reduces regulatory effectiveness made many respondents push for more autonomy for labour institutions, not sure it was worded exactly that way, but basically yes. A labour expert said, "Regulatory agencies need sufficient independence and authority to enforce compliance without external pressures." Participants went on to connect the low level of trust among stakeholders with inadequate communication routes, and they suggested better engagement and dialogue between government, employers, and labour unions so misunderstandings don't grow into conflicts. Overall, these suggestions show a direct thread between the empirical results and the reforms being proposed. So, by tackling weak enforcement, delayed dispute resolution, institutional constraints, and stakeholder mistrust, the suggested reforms aim to boost the effectiveness of regulatory frameworks, while supporting sustainable industrial peace. In that sense, the recommendations in this study match the institutional strengthening stance that Fashoyin (2019) and Nwuche (2022) advance as a way to secure industrial peace.

Summary of Findings

The study found that even though Nigeria's labour laws, like the Labour Act, Trade Unions Act, and Trade Disputes Act, do give some regulatory frame for labour relations, in practice their impact is kept back by weak enforcement and also by not so effective institutional systems. Sure, government agencies, employers, and trade unions do take up important roles in labour relations, but industrial peace is still often shaken by mistrust, disagreements on policy, and general poor follow through on the commitments that were negotiated.

It was also clear from the findings that workers in the informal sector have limited access to formal labour protection, so they end up more exposed to exploitation and those unsafe working situations. Plus, the wider socio - political atmosphere such as government policies, economic

reforms, and media influence included really helps determine how labour disputes rise and how industrial relations turn out across Nigeria.

Integrating Findings with Existing Literature

The research results validate existing academic research which shows that labour relations in Nigeria faced three main obstacles: weak enforcement of laws and regulations, inefficient operation of institutions, and interference from political and social elements. The research results show that informal work practices reduce government supervision capabilities while the study provides detailed information about how different parties involved the research process and their work to gather information. This research study shows that informal labour patterns have become more important than traditional formal sector worker disputes for maintaining industrial harmony between workers and employers.

The research results show that Nigerian labour relations laws need better enforcement because their current performance is affected by various issues. The first is institutional, and the second, has to do with workers in informal sector workers and lastly is political interference. These challenges often caused disruption of industrial harmony and repeated labour disputes.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings showed that even though Nigeria has set labour regulations in place, their effectiveness seems to be held back by weak enforcement setups, institutional inefficiencies, and long delays when it comes to resolving disputes. The study also suggested that public agencies, employers, and trade unions do matter a lot in labour relations, however their day-to-day interactions are sometimes marked by mistrust, disagreements over policy, and low follow-through on the deals that are actually negotiated. The results further indicated that informal sector workers typically have limited access to formal labour protection, so they end up more exposed to exploitation and unsafe working conditions. On top of that, the research pointed out that socio political factors like government choices, economic reforms, and even media influence can strongly steer labour disputes and the overall results of industrial relations, and in the end, this affects how realistic industrial peace is in Nigeria.

Implications for Industrial Peace

The research results provide information which will be useful to establish sustainable industrial peace. The combination of weak labour law enforcement and inadequate institutional coordination leads to workplaces' strikes and conflicts which lead to ongoing work interruptions. The situation creates productivity losses which result in essential service breakdowns and hinder the country's economic growth. Better labour relations will provide benefits to improve worker welfare and build trust between different groups while creating better business conditions.

Recommendations for Policy Reforms

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

i. labour legislations in Nigeria should be strengthened through targeted amendments that address gaps in enforcement, compliance, and dispute resolution. The Labour Act and related laws should be reviewed to reflect current labour realities, particularly informal employment and emerging work arrangements.

ii. enforcement mechanisms should also be strengthened by improving the capacity, independence, and funding of labour institutions such as regulatory agencies and industrial

courts, while ensuring strict and consistent sanctions for non-compliance with collective agreements.

iii. structured stakeholder dialogue platforms should be strengthened to promote trust, transparency, and timely resolution of disputes among government, employers, and trade unions.

iv. to address informal employment challenges, informal workers should be integrated into national labour protection systems through simplified registration processes, expanded social protection coverage, and inclusive labour policies.

v. government and labour institutions should also implement empowerment programmes to improve access to training, financial services, and cooperative associations. Strengthening of informal sector unions or associations will further enhance collective bargaining power and improve working conditions.

vi. capacity-building programmes should be provided for labour administrators, trade union leaders, and employers to enhance skills in negotiation, mediation, and conflict management.

vii. regular stakeholder forums shoudl be institutionalized by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, in collaboration with trade unions, employers' associations and relevant regulatory agencies to encourage continuous talk, early detection of disputes, and effective collective bargaining. These forums could be held quarterly, at national, sectoral, and organizational levels at the same time, with clear mechanisms for tracking resolution progress and implementing the agreed actions. This more structured engagement process would foster trust among the stakeholders, support labour-management relations, and help avoid the escalation of industrial disputes.

Future Research Directions

Future research should:

i. examine emerging trends in labour relations in Nigeria, particularly the impact of digital work, gig economy platforms, and technological changes on employment relations. Comparative studies across sectors and regions are also needed to better understand variations in industrial relations practices.

ii. longitudinal studies are recommended to evaluate the long-term effects of regulatory reforms on industrial peace and labour governance outcomes as informal employment dynamics and their implications for national labour policy should be focused on.

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