



IMPACT OF LABOUR RELATIONS ON NIGERIAN MARITIME ECONOMY

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Abstract

The devastating effect of COVID-19 pandemic is greatly felt in different areas of life in Nigeria, especially in employment relationship in most organizations. Till date, the spread of COVID 19 is increasing geometrically compelling most businesses operating in Nigeria and beyond into shutting down completely; while others re-strategize to accommodate new measures and practices that will minimize the danger of being effected by the virus at workplaces. However, these changes also have implications on employment relationship as it forces organizations to face the dreadful conundrum on whether to go online completely, terminate some of their employees' employment contracts, initiate salary cut, among others. Regardless of which choice the organization made, the employment relationship is bound to face some changes that may need the interference of trade union. This study investigated the impact of labour relations on maritime economy. The study adopted a descriptive research study where questionnaire was distributed to 120 selected workers across five maritime companies located in Apapa area of Lagos state using snowball sampling technique. The data collected was descriptively analyzed using frequencies and percentages while the hypotheses formulated were tested using Chi-square. The result indicated that labour relations have significant impact on maritime economy and from this result conclusion was drawn and recommendations made.

Keywords: Labour, relations, maritime, economy

1 Introduction

Workers of today require benefits that enhance their importance, enrich their lives and make them valuable to the organization. The role of employees in an organization has grown in great importance over the years. Labour relations are a common phenomenon among business organization including Maritime. Labour relations refer to the link between abilities, skills, opportunities and values. Labour relation to a worker is a way to live, obtain recognition and become self-developed. Employers now realize that it takes more than salary to keep workers in an organization committed. It goes beyond financial benefits and encompasses security, safety at work, duties and rights to ensure job satisfaction. The term labour relations refers to the process by which employers and their workers make decisions in terms of wages, working conditions, hours of work, and safety at work, security and grievances.

Hassan (2016) pointed out that the industrial climate within an organization is determined by the relationship between labour and management. Thus, as observed by Long (2014) it is important to maintain proper relations between employees and trade unions. The focus of Labour-management relationship is on workers and their collective identity. It regulates relations in terms of employment and compensation, as well as provides an avenue for advocacy. This implies that the successful implementation of labour relations in an organization will ensure the fairness of labour practices and contribute to the successful functioning of an organisations success.

Despite the significance attached to labour relations, it also has certain disadvantages such as employees abusing the system based on their knowledge of all the loop holes and what they can be fired for or not fired for. Improper labour relations breed an atmosphere of lack of cooperation between managers and workers which minimizes collaboration the workers and the organizations' managers. This negative aspect of labour relation spells negativity on an economy, of which the maritime economy is no exception. The Maritime Economy is a field of study charged with overseeing the utilization of materials and human resources and their development over time. Also referred to as the blue economy,

it encompasses every marketable operations connected to the sea (Kalaydjian, 2014).

Maritime transportation entails the movement of passengers and freight over water. The maritime sector contributes over 90 per cent to the world economy, given the number of merchant ships plying the sea and transferring goods to various places, in order to keep the economy running. More than 90% of the world trade is moved by ships, which are operated by seafarers (This day, 2021). The implication of this is that a very huge percentage of mankind's needs are served by seafarers.

In spite of the importance of the maritime workers to humans and the nation as a whole, they are not privileged to the best of working conditions, which more often than not leads industrial action and shutdown of ports activities. An instance of strike action in the maritime sector was in 2018, when in the bid protest against the repeal of the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) Act, all port activities across the country were grounded. The strike lasted for six and half hours, and workers at the Apapa, Tin Can, Onne and other port formations laid aside their work tools bringing operations to a total halt. The reason behind the strike was against the presentation of a new bill to repeal the NPA Act, 2004 in which no relevant stakeholders were invited to make an input before passing the bill. The new bill was perceived as a threat to workers' survival and job security, despite its aims to establish the Nigerian Ports and Harbour Authority (This day, 2021).

Based on the above, the management of labour relations is a significant issue in the management of human resources. A school of thought laid emphasis on the importance of workplace learning, high commitment and enlightened leadership. According to this school of thought, Maslow (1954) and Herzberg (1966), the human resources of an organization are valued assets rather than variable costs of production (Ige, 1989). The existence of labour movement is the effective protection of employees' interests and larger society, this means that employees within an organization are challenged by issues of disunity and lack of cooperation, and it is the means by which labour movements are able to achieve their goal (Onwe, 2014). To this end, this paper assesses the impact of labour relations on maritime economy.

2 Statement of research problem

The effect of an unhealthy relationship with management is the poor production output or poor attitude to work. When employees are unhappy at their workplaces, they tend to put a poor performance (Blyton, 2008) and a bad employee-employer relationship leads to strike actions. This sort of actions in which they make their grievances known reduces productivity and causes the organization more harm. On this account and as revealed in previous studies, employee relations in most organizations are in crisis. The nature of work in the maritime sector exposes workers to unfair labour practice and exploitation by vessel owners, which entitles them to standard wages, good working conditions and decent living, as these factors directly impact on their physical and psychological well-being, which in turn affects their job quality. The maritime sector contributes to the economy in terms of linking the supply chain. Maritime workers are constantly under strain and risk exposure in the course of transporting goods from one location to another. In spite of this recognition given to maritime workers, the rights of maritime workers are negatively affected in terms of annual leave, repatriation, unpaid wages, and unfavourable work conditions. This implies that ineffective labour relations hinder activities which should otherwise have been profitable to the maritime. To this end, this paper seeks to examine the impact of labour relations on maritime economy.

3 Research objectives

Generally, the study examines the impact of labour relations on maritime economy. Specifically, the study seeks to;

1. Identify various employee relations practices,
2. Ascertain the effect of employee relations on the productivity of an organization.
3. Identify the challenges faced by employees in maritime sector.
4. Examine the impact of labour relations on maritime economy.

4 Research questions

1. What are the various employee relations practices in your organization?
2. What are the effects of employee relations on the productivity?
3. What are the challenges faced by employees in the maritime sector?
4. What is the impact of labour relations on maritime economy?
- 5.

5 Research hypothesis

H0: There is no significant impact of labour relations on maritime economy.

H1: There is a significant impact of labour relations on maritime economy.

6 Literature Review

Overview of labour relations

Labour relation which is also referred to as industrial relations, means the system in which employers, workers and their representatives and the government either directly or indirectly interact to set the ground rules for the governance of work relationships. It describes a field of study committed to examining such relationships. Industrial relations according to Zhang (2018) are defined as the management of work-related obligations and privileges between employers and their employees. In the Maritime sector, labour relations involves keeping open all channels of communication and dialogue for resolution of dispute among the various stakeholders in the industry comprising port authorities, seamen's unions, ship owners, crewing agencies, etc.

In a labour relations system, the parties involved are the state, the employers and the representatives of the workers. The core focus of labour relations is seen as the one which lays emphasis on the development of peaceful relations and mutual respect for everyone. It specifically focuses on how mutual agreements are effected and understood. One of the actors in industrial relations is the trade union which has played a prominent role in promoting industrial relations in West Africa States (Adeniji, 2015).

Importance of labour relations

- It reduces disputes (and any form of unrest such as strikes, go-slow tactics and grievances which do not spring up in a peaceful atmosphere) by promoting cooperation and increasing productivity.
- It ensures continuity in productivity such as continuous employment for everyone resulting in uninterrupted flow of income. It ensures full utilization of resources and a smooth running of the maritime industry which is crucial for the smooth running of other industries.
- Promotes industrial democracy: Industrial democracy means the government mandated worker participates at various levels of the organisation regarding decisions that affect workers. It is predominantly the joint consultations that pave the way for industrial democracy and reinforce relationship between workers and management.
- Good labour relations improve the confidence of the employees. Employees work with enthusiasm knowing that the interest of employer and employees are the same which is to increase production. In other words, industrial peace is achieved when there is unity of thought and action as cooperative efforts can yield great results.

Poor labour relations according to Causes & Effects of Poor Industrial Relation: Approaches to Industrial Relations (2017) are caused by: An intolerant attitude of contempt on the part of the management towards the workers. Inadequate wage structure; unfavourable working conditions. Supervisors and managers' lack of human relations, excessive workloads and inadequate welfare amenities, Unfair labour practices such as victimization and unjustified dismissal, Inter-union rivalries and overall economic and political environment like increasing prices, strikes

and general indiscipline having their effect on the attitude of employees

Odey and Owan (2014) investigated the influence of trade unionism and the enhancement of workers' welfare in Nigeria, using maritime workers' union of Nigeria as a case study. Data was analysed using the one-way analysis of variance and Pearson product moment correlation statistics and the findings revealed that the union members adopted a level of negotiation that wields significant influence on workers' welfare. It was observed that majority of the conflicts and strikes in work settings were because workers were deprived from benefiting from their welfare package either by management or by ill-mannered union leaders. Adeniji (2015) carried out a study to compare and contrast industrial relations practice in two countries in West African particularly in Ghana and Nigeria, showing the area of difference and similarities between these two nations.

7 Theoretical framework: The Pluralist Theory of Industrial Relations

The theory employed in this research is the pluralist theory of industrial relations. In this theory, the relationship between employers and workers is also one of conflict. Workers argue for higher wages, better working conditions and increased benefits through trade unions while employers want to make profit by keeping as much money as they can. The two sides negotiate to reach a middle ground, rather than violence or conflict. A vital part of this model is that workers recognize that it is in their best interest for the company to thrive, so while they are loyal to both the union and their employer (Weedmark, 2019). Employers on the other hand, understand that for employees to be productive the wages should be fair and the working conditions good conditions.

8 The Pluralism theory

The Pluralism theory is built upon the system theory proposed by Dunlop's (1958) in which organizational relationship is viewed as 'sub-system of the wider social system (Dundon&Rollinson, 2011). This calls for controlling work using formal and informal rules and regulations. The Pluralist opines that labour standards and laws are significant in the mediation between employee and employers relationship (Budd, Gomez, &Meltz, 2004). It is the view of this theory that labour extends beyond commodity and must be treated with equity. The pluralist philosophy believes that conflict is necessary, thus requiring organization to be receptive to labour suggestions because labour is seen as imperfect. To this end, there should be bargained interest between employers and employees to achieve a common aim.

9 Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research study. The study population comprised of every worker in the maritime sector. The sample size for the study comprised of 120 workers purposively selected from five maritime companies located in Apapa area of Lagos state using snowball sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire, which was distributed with the aid of field research assistants. The questionnaire was structured into two, section A which elicited demographic information and section B which elicited responses to the questions formulated. The data collected was descriptively analyzed using mean and percentages. The hypotheses formulated were tested using Chi-square.

10 Data presentation, Analysis and Discussions

120 questionnaires were distributed but only 107 were retrieved and thus constitute the actual sample size studied in this paper. The analysis is as presented subsequently:

Demographic data

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondent

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	79	73.8
Female	28	26.2
Total	107	100
Education qualification		
OND/NCE	35	33
B.Sc./ HND	58	54.5
M. Sc./MBA	14	12.5
Total	107	100
Length of employment		
Less than 5 years	37	34.6
5 but less than 10 years	48	44.8
10 but less than 20 years	13	12.1
20 years and above	9	8.4
Other	0	0
Total	107	100

Field survey 2021

The table above shows that both male (73.8%) and female (26.2%) employees participated in this study with different levels of academic achievements ranging from OND/NCE (33%); BSc/HND (54.5%) and MSc/MBA (12.5%) respectively. These employees has diverse years of experience from less than 5 years (34.6%); 5 but less than 10 years (44.8%); 10 but less than 20years (12.1%); 20 years and above (8.4%).

Research Question 1: What are the various employee relations practices in your organization?

Table 2: The various employee relations practices in organizations

S/N	STATEMENT	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%	% in Agreement
1	Conducive workplace culture	28	26.2	55	51.4	14	13.08	10	9.3	77.6
2	Effective communication	56	52.3	39	36.4	11	10.3	1	0.9	88.7
3	Conducive workplace environment	6	5.6	91	85.01	8	7.5	2	1.8	90.6
4	Regular team meeting	73	68.2	19	17.8	13	12.1	2	1.8	86.0
5	Adequate diversity management	88	82.2	4	3.7	11	10.3	4	3.7	85.9

Field survey 2021

The above indicates the various employee relations practices in organizations. Among these are: Conducive workplace culture (77.6%); Effective communication (88.7%); Conducive workplace culture (90.6%); Regular team meeting (86.0%); and Adequate diversity management (85.9%). It is not surprising that every employee prefer working in a conducive environment. According to Pawirosumarto, Sarjana and Gunawan (2017) revealed that the physical working environment such as physical layout, tools, space, noise, and materials as well as employees relationship with colleague has significant impacts on employee performance in an organization. Such impact may be positive or negative depending on whether the environment is to the employee liking or not.

Again, effective communication is essential to employees' performance. Because of its important, Salako (2016) compared communication to

“Life blood” of an organization while miscommunication or poor communication was liken to ‘cardiovascular’ damage which impede employees efficiency. If an intended message is not received as intended, it is likely to damage not just one but many other employees, employers or the third party involves in the organization. This is imperative because it is through communication that the entire workforce shares meaning with each other. In same vein, team meeting enables the workers to understand each other and the goal their common goals and responsibilities; the culture of the environment are feature they share in common that unit them together.

Research question 2: What are the effects of employee relations on productivity?

Table 2: The effect of employee relations on productivity

S/N	STATEMENT	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%	% in Agreement
1	It lead to more efficient, motivated and productive employees	28	26.2	55	51.4	14	13.08	10	9.3	77.6
2	It makes individuals value their employer and they are more inclined to be productive and hard-working	56	52.3	39	36.4	11	10.3	1	0.9	88.7
3	Strengthens corporate communication and culture	6	5.6	91	85.01	8	7.5	2	1.8	90.6
4	promotes teamwork which achieves organizational goals	73	68.2	19	17.8	13	12.1	2	1.8	86.0

Field survey 2021

The table above presents the effect of employee relations on productivity. As indicated in the table, employees relations leads to more efficient, motivated and productive employees (77.6%) which supports the earlier study by Thapliyal (2019) who revealed a positive impact between employee relations and productivity. The result in the table also indicated that employees relation makes individuals value their employer and they are more inclined to be productive and hard-working (88.7%). It also indicated that employee relations Strengthens corporate communication and culture, as well as promote team work .

Research Question 3: What are the challenges faced by employees in the maritime sector?

Table 4: The challenges faced by employees in the maritime sector

S/N	STATEMENT	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%	% in Agreement
1	Rising costs	28	26.2	55	51.4	14	13.08	10	9.3	77.6
2	Security risks	56	52.3	39	36.4	11	10.3	1	0.9	88.7
3	Environmental regulations	91	85.01	6	5.6	8	7.5	2	1.8	90.6
4	Abuse of power	73	68.2	19	17.8	13	12.1	2	1.8	86

Field survey 2021

The table above presents the various challenges faced by employees in the maritime sector. As indicated in the table both the company and the employees experience one challenges or another. As revealed in the table, some of the challenges include: rising costs (77.6%) which could affect both the company as well as the employees. For one thing, the employee the current inflation is affecting the cost of running business in all sectors in Nigeria including Maritime. Such pressure affects the companies’ ability to pay salaries which makes life difficult for the employees. Again, security (88.7%). It is no doubt that when a company faces difficulties especially that which affect salaries, they are likely going to initiate salary cut or lay off some staff. Such situation does not guarantee employees security. Naturally, even with low salaries, employees tend to feel at ease if their job security is guaranteed. The result of this study supports Sanyal, Hisam and Ba-Oma (2018) and Heibutzki (2013) whose respective studies indicates that employees perform better in jobs that gives them security in terms of career stability, enhanced motivation, and other considerations. The study also revealed that 90.6% are in agreement that environmental regulations affect that affects Maritime in Nigeria. Finally, abuse of power (86%) is another challenge, facing maritime sector. This implies that no organization exist without one challenges or the other. Because of these challenges, in attempt to make ends meets, some employers mistreats their workers which makes these workers seek help

from labour union that will protect their interest.

Research Question 4: What is the impact of labour relations on maritime economy?

Table 4: The impact of labour relations on maritime economy

S/N	STATEMENT	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%	% in Agreement
1	Labour relations facilitate increase in sector contributions to national revenue and the gross domestic product.	28	26.2	69	64.4	0	0	10	9.3	90.7
2	It helps to track, determine and react to changing needs quickly	57	53.2	39	36.4	11	10.3	0	0.0	89.6
3	It enables provision of needed infrastructure in the ports	56	52.3	50	46.7	0	0	1	0.9	99.0
4	Effective labour relations in the maritime trade reduces unnecessary security costs borne by shipping industries	73	68.2	19	17.8	13	12.1	2	1.8	86.0

Field survey 2021

The table above presents the opinion of the respondents on the impact of labour relations on maritime economy. As indicated in the table labour relations facilitate increase in sector contributions to national revenue and the gross domestic product (90.7%); helps to track, determine and react to changing needs quickly (89.6%); enables provision of needed infrastructure in the ports; (99.0%) and reduces unnecessary security costs borne by shipping industries (86%). This shows that people works well when they know that their employer has their back. Their confidence is further built when they are sure that when met with challenges, there is a body that will mediate for them. Thus, more than salaries, employees also need security, comfort, conducive environment, and better infrastructure to function well.

Research hypothesis

H0: There is no significant impact of labour relations on maritime economy.

H1: There is a significant impact of labour relations on maritime economy.

Table 4.3.2: Chi-Square Test Statistics between

	Labour relations has significant impact on maritime economy
Chi-Square	219.67 ^a
Df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000
Mean	4.870

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 31.2.

In this study, the mean value was 3.870 which could be approximated to 4. In this study, '4' stands for strongly agreed in the 4 point Likert scales adopted in this study. This implies that the respondents strongly agreed to the question that labour relation has significant impact on maritime economy. The Chi-Square test is 219.67^a with P. value of 0.000. The P-value is below the proposed 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the study rejects the null hypothesis that there is no significant impact of labour relations on maritime economy. This implies that a labour relation has significant impact on maritime economy.

11 Conclusions and Recommendation

The result in this study has supported that labour relations has significant impact on maritime economy. This is essential because employment relationship connects the employers and employees through which services/labour are transact (Abbott, 2006). The relationship takes into consideration five key elements: employees, employer, market, contract and state (Heery, 2016). How these elements relate is firmly rooted under one or more philosophies including: unitarism, pluralism and radicalism. In a Puralist's organization which strongly advocates trade union, it is revealed that labour standards and laws are meant to mediate between employee and employers relationship (Budd, Gomez, & Meltz, 2004). In this sense, employees are not seen as mere commodity but treated as people with voice and equity (Budd & Bhave, 2019; Budd, 2004). In such relationship, the labour relations such as trade union serve as mediator in the case of conflict, marginalization, among others. Against this theory as well as the findings of this study, we conclude that labour relations have significant impact on maritime economy.

As a result, the study recommends, that maritime employers should always treat their workers with honesty and fairness to avoid any form of industrial action that will affect maritime economy. The study also recommends effective communication using diverse media to ensure that messages are adequately shared among employees to avoid any form of misunderstanding. Finally, the study recommends that maritime employers should enhance employees job satisfaction through adequate compensation, salaries, recommendations, or avoid any form of bias or mistreatment of employees.

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Appendix

IMPACT OF LABOUR RELATIONS ON MARITIME ECONOMY

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Dear Respondent,

I am carrying out a study on "Impact of labour relations on maritime economy", and you have been chosen to be part of the study. This questionnaire is only for academic purposes. Kindly select the response which applies to you and all information will be kept confidential

SECTION A

Gender: Male () Female ()

Education qualification

- a) OND/NCE ()
 b) B.Sc./ HND ()
 c) M. Sc./MBA ()
 d) Others () Specify.....

Length of employment

- a) 1-5 years ()
 b) 6-10 years ()
 c) 10-20 years ()
 d) Others () Specify.....

SECTION B:

Instructions: Please tick (√) as appropriate where

SA = Strongly Agree (SA), A = Agree, D = Disagree (D), SD = Strongly Disagree (SD)

Key: Strongly agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1).

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
RQ1	What are the various employee relations practices in your organization?				
1	Conducive workplace culture				
2	Effective communication				
3	Conducive workplace culture				
4	Regular team meeting				
5	Adequate diversity management				
RQ2	What are the effects of employee relations on productivity?				
5	It lead to more efficient, motivated and productive employees				
6	It makes individuals value their employer and they are more inclined to be productive and hard-working				
7	Strengthening corporate communication and culture				
8	promotes teamwork which achieves organizational goals				
RQ3	What are the challenges faced by employees in the maritime sector?				
9	Rising costs				

10	Security risks				
11	Environmental regulations				
12	Abuse of power				
RQ4	What is the impact of labour relations on maritime economy?				
13	Labour relations facilitate increase in sector contributions to national revenue and the gross domestic product.				
14	It helps to track, determine and react to changing needs quickly				
15	It enables provision of needed infrastructure in the ports				
16	Effective labour relations in the maritime trade reduces unnecessary security costs borne by shipping industries				