

UNIONISM AND WELFARE OF LECTURERS IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES, DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated unionism and welfare of lecturers in private universities, Delta State, Nigeria. The study adopted the ex-post-facto design of descriptive method. Stratified sampling technique was adopted to sample 115 respondents from a population 384 teaching. Instrument used to obtain data was entitled Unionism and Welfare of Lecturers Questionnaire (UWLQ). For statistical analysis, research questions were analysed using mean scores and standard deviation. While hypotheses were tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. Findings show that unionism affects welfare of lecturers by improving workers' wages, advance employment conditions amongst others. Perception of lecturers in private universities on the operation of unions is that unionism should be allowed and lecturers should belong to the same union as their counterparts in public universities. It was recommended among others that unionism is the only legal means to voice out lecturers' opinions and intentions as such, private universities should allow the establishment of unions in their institutions.

KEYWORDS: Unionism, Welfare, Lecturers, Private Universities, Delta State

INTRODUCTION

Education has become a huge industry that accounts for millions of jobs world-wide. In Nigeria, the various levels of education have helped to provide employment for good percentage of the employable populace. This has had far reaching economic and social impact on the life of the individuals, educational institutions themselves and the society at large. Hence, Ozturk [1] affirmed that one of the fundamental of development is education. It plays a very critical role in fortifying economic and social advancement and refining income distribution. Like every other industry, in educational industry there is an interplay of force driving the interaction between the employers and the employees, because education in its current form is operated publicly and privately. While the proprietors of educational institutions, especially private institutions are driven by the desire of just wages and good working condition. With particular reference to university education, since the Nigerian government began to issue licenses to operators of private universities, university education became a big business, with a primary purpose of profit maximization [2]. Thus, there is a possibility for exploitation and oppression of workers by employees [3]. Very often, employees in educational institution form unions and organize themselves in such a manner that they are enabled to bargain with employers for just wages and good working condition. Emergence of trade unions and its formation are ideological for aware

creation which is only meant at protecting employees from perceived mistreatment and oppression from employers and management [4].

In the Nigerian University space, workers desire to protect their interest and develop the power for bargaining has led to the formation of several unions including the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Non-Academic Staff Union of Universities (NASU), and so on. Over the years, there have been battles between ASUU, for instance, and the federal government on the improvement of wages for university system as a whole. These have led to series of negotiations which led to improvement in the areas of lack. For instance, ASUU has been on strike for several months now in 2020 in protest against government's inability to meet up with the previous agreements reached with it on the welfare of university lecturers. This has improved the lot of lecturers in public universities. But, what is the fate of the lecturers teaching in privately owned universities? Like in other privately owned schools, where there are no trade unions may likely lead to workers being subjected to oppression and exploitation as they may be compelled to work under harsh and deplorable conditions without corresponding reward for their labour [3].

Unionism Conceptualized

The formation of the International Labour Organization (ILO) is a global recognition of the need for a platform for labour to be able to negotiate what happens in the work place and ensure fair treatment of workers everywhere. The British Government Trade Union Act of 1913 is one of the initial definitions of unionism, conceived it as "any temporary or permanent, combination, under the structure of which the major objectives are: the guideline which is relative between workmen and workmen, master and workmen, or master and masters, or imposition of preventive conditions on the behaviour of any trade union or business." While the ILO, it is an organization of workforces usually allied beyond the boundaries of one enterprise, recognized for shielding or refining through shared action, the members' economic and social position [5].

Trade unions are the main power base of the workforce; this power can promote the resolution of problems faced by the workers in an organization. Many of the increases in wages, allowances and bonuses in Nigeria especially in higher institutions of learning are products of unions activities [6]. Alale [7] agrees that unionization is one reaction of employees to employers' actions. Through its leadership, the trade union bargains with employers on behalf of union affiliates and negotiates labour contracts with employers. The most mutual drive of these association/unions is upholding or enhancing the condition of their employment [5]. For instance, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in Nigeria has continued to press on the state and federal governments for university autonomy, good governance, improved funding, proper remuneration, provision of research grants, general uplift of the educational sector and the welfare of employees in institutions of higher learning [7]. Again, Okolie [8] explained that the emergence of these unions have become a desired form of association in order to restore the dignity of professional workers and to ensure a great level of overall national development which is part of nation building.

Welfare of Lecturers as a Concept

Paying attention to the welfare of employees has always been one of the main factors in their productivity. Likewise, facilities of employees in an organisation will be accomplished by the usage of techniques for the quality of working life [22]. Bell and Menguc [23] said that the welfare of employees is vital to their participation in the achiever of the organisation. Employees of an organization always become particularly interested in and believe in organizations based on the value that the organization respects to provide them with well-being, comfort, and safety [24]. The planning of health and wellbeing of employees and compatibility of the work conditions with the requisites of their physical and mental situations is no longer only a privilege, merely a humane duty and a requirement for the possibility of productive activities contributing to the conservation and betterment of the workforce, enhancement of efficiency, and multiplication of capital [25]. Likewise, offering an incentive necessary to puzzle out and paying attention to motivational forces of employees account for the most important, yet most complex tasks of an administrator [26].

Unionism and welfare of lecturers

Unionism plays an important role on welfare of lecturers. Most studies emphasis on union membership to describe lecturers' unionization and revealed that unions increase workers wellbeing [9]. Earlier studies revealed that teachers' unions are related with higher incomes and that the union–non-union salary discrepancy is lesser among workers in public enterprise than in private enterprise [10]; [11]; [12]. Gyourko and Tracy [13] estimate that the union wage effect is about 10% in the absence of the controls for individual teacher characteristics. Using a district-level data set, Lemke [14] estimates the union premium to be about 8% for public school teachers in rural areas of Pennsylvania. Zwerling and Thomason [15] show that a 10% increase in states' union membership rate raises the highest teacher salary by 2.6%. Even when bargaining is infrequently, most teachers join unions, different legal environment influence teachers' perception of joining unions greatly and changes in public policies restraining teachers' bargaining privileges significantly decrease teacher recompense [9]. With 20%, Hirsch, Macpherson, and Winters [16] estimated the influence of bargaining attention on teacher income to be high. Mykerezi and West [17] and West [18] find that collective bargaining meaningfully influences teacher wage schedules. Scholars also viewed the "restrictiveness" of collective bargaining and revealed that contract forte is linked with union strength and with advanced district spending. On a contrary Orji and Kabiru [19] discovered a substantial relationship between non-trade unionism and work peace, academic productivity and growth of Private universities in Nigerian unlike public Universities; and unionism in Nigerian private universities do not disrupt students' academic activities, which enhances student's performance.

Perception of lecturers in private universities on the operation of unions

There are three principal unions in Nigerian Universities: The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU); the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU); and, the Non-Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities and Allied Institutions (NASU). Each of these unions fight against injustice, and also fights for the welfare of its members [2]. Since the study focuses on the welfare of

lecturers in the universities, ASUU is the proper union to examine. Over the years, ASUU has been on the forefront of agitations for the welfare of university lecturers and the university system in general. About ASUU, Amadioha [20] states that the organization of the intellectual labour force within the academia in Nigeria has a long history of emergence, transformation, struggle and success. The achievement recorded is preponderantly quantitative but also fairly qualitative. This is especially in terms of demands or advocacy by academic unions aimed at transforming the academic system. There are people who however believe that unionism has had some adverse effect on university system. Okecha [2] maintains that the clash of interest among unions in university has affected the quality and integrity of the Ivory Tower. While Orji, Ringin, Boman and Emmanuel [5] feels that the activities of unions have affected commitment and productivity of academic staff in the university.

Perceived effects of non-operation of unions on the welfare of lecturers

There had been earlier attempts at founding private universities in Nigerian history. But it came to reality under President Olusegun Obasanjo. According to Okwori and Okwori [21] the legitimization of private universities in Nigeria was due to the famous supreme court ruling in favour of Dr. Basil Ukaegbu, the proprietor of the Imo State Technical University on the legality of the institution. With this judgement, in 2009, there were about thirty-two private universities in Nigeria. As at 2020, there are seventy-nine private universities in Nigeria. Orji, et. al., [5] believe that the emergence of private universities is justified by the huge educational deficit they fill. With this also came the issue of the welfare of those who teach in those institutions. The staff are poorly paid and the conditions of service deplorable. According to Okecha [2] private universities hardly pay pension benefits, and so are unable to attract quality academics, who would normally want to have tenure. Staff development is almost alien. For most of these universities the game is profit maximization. This condition is worsened by absence of unions through which lecturers can agitate for their welfare. Odey and Sambe [3] state that because proprietors of private universities do not allow unions, lecturers are forced to be more productive even with less pay than their colleagues in public universities. Perhaps, absence of unions in private universities leaves lecturers at the mercy of the proprietors.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In every organization, there is always a drive towards a balance between the attainment of organizations goal namely; profit and the welfare of workers in the form of just remuneration and conducive conditions of service. This is often reached through constant negotiation between employers and their employees. Employees acquire the capacity and power of negotiation through unions which facilitate collective bargaining. Universities as institutions, run often by this process. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has been at the forefront of forging a better condition of service for universities lecturers in publicly owned universities of Federal and state governments. Given however, that the university system in Nigeria also allow the operation of private universities where lecturers are at the mercy of the proprietors who take exceptions to the operation of unions in their universities, how do lecturers in those institution forge a future for better working condition in such institutions? This is the cruise of the matter in the study. The study therefore, examines how unionism

affects the welfare of lecturers, perception of lecturers in private universities on the operation of unions and perceived effects of non-operation of unions on the welfare of lecturers in private universities.

Research Questions

1. How does unionism affect the welfare of lecturers in private universities?
2. What is the perception of lecturers in private universities on the operation of unions in private universities?
3. What are the perceived effects of non-operation of unions on the welfare of lecturers in private universities?

Hypotheses

1. Sex perception do not differ on how unionism affect the welfare of lecturers in private universities.
2. Sex perception of lecturers in private universities do not differ on the operation of unions in private universities.
3. Sex perception do not differ on perceived effects of non-operation of unions on the welfare of lecturers in private universities.

METHOD

The study adopted the ex-post-facto design of the descriptive survey method. The population of the study comprises of the 384 lecturers of the five private universities in Delta State. Using a stratified sampling technique, 115 respondents were selected for the study, representing 30% of the whole population. The instrument for data collection was a self-developed questionnaire structured in four-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA=4), Agree (A=3), Disagree (D=2) and Strongly Disagree (SD=1), the instrument was entitled Unionism and Welfare of Lecturers Questionnaire (UWLQ) which contained twenty-four items. To ensure that the instrument was valid for the study, it was subjected to face and content validity through experts' judgment. Subsequently, a reliability test was carried out on the instrument using split-halves procedure while the scores were compared using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient and yielded a positive correlation of 0.75 showing a high reliability index. For statistical analysis, research questions were analysed using mean scores and standard deviation. While the hypotheses were tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. A value below 2.50 invalidated the research questions of the study.

Presentation of Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: How does unionism affects the welfare of lecturers in private universities?

Table 1: Mean scores and standard deviation analysis on how unionism affects welfare of lecturers

S/N	How unionism affects welfare of lecturers	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Improve workers' wages	3.00	.83	Agree
2.	Advance employment conditions	3.02	.83	Agree
3.	Raise members' social status	3.00	.82	Agree
4.	Show interest in workers' welfare	2.99	.81	Agree
5.	Legal recognition to negotiate terms/conditions	3.01	.83	Agree
6.	Struggle against unpopular employees' policies	3.02	.81	Agree
7.	Mobilize members to arid the general public on the need to resist employees' action	3.00	.81	Agree
8.	Enhance workplace communication	3.05	.80	Agree

Table 1 shows mean scores and standard deviation analysis on how unionism affects the welfare of lecturers. Results in the table revealed that respondents agree with mean scores of 3.00, 3.02, 3.00, 2.99, 3.01, 3.02, 3.00 and 3.05 on improve workers' wages, advance employment conditions, raise members' social status, show interest in workers' welfare, legal recognition to negotiate terms/conditions, struggle against unpopular employees' policies, mobilize members to arid the general public on the need to resist employees' action and enhance workplace communication respectively. It could therefore be concluded that unionism affects welfare of lecturers by improving workers' wages, advance employment conditions, raise members' social status, show interest in workers' welfare, legal recognition to negotiate terms/conditions, struggle against unpopular employees' policies, mobilize members to arid the general public on the need to resist employees' action and enhance workplace communication in private universities.

Research Question 2: What is the perception of lecturers in private universities on the operation of unions in private universities?

Table 2: Mean scores and standard deviation analysis on perception of lecturers in private universities on the operation of unions

S/N	Perception of lecturers on operation of unions	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Unionism should be allowed	3.00	.81	Agree
2.	Lecturers should belong to the same union as their counterparts in public universities	2.99	.83	Agree
3.	A unified negotiation with their counterparts in public universities for their welfare	2.93	.79	Agree
4.	Fight for their rights within the institution	2.99	.84	Agree
5.	Bring development to the institution	3.00	.79	Agree
6.	A voice that speak for all	3.05	.83	Agree
7.	Voice for improved working environment	2.99	.82	Agree
8.	Improve collective bargaining	3.04	.80	Agree

Table 2 shows mean scores and standard deviation analysis on perception of lecturers in private universities on the operation of unions. Results in the table revealed that respondents agree with mean scores of 3.00, 2.99, 2.93, 2.99, 3.00, 3.05, 2.99 and 3.04 on unionism should be allowed, lecturers should belong to the same union as their counterparts in public universities, a unified negotiation with their counterparts in public universities for their welfare, fight for their rights within the institution, bring development to the institution, a voice that speak for all, voice for improved working environment and improve collective bargaining respectively. Conclusively, perception of lecturers in private universities on the operation of unions is that unionism should be allowed, lecturers should belong to the same union as their counterparts in public universities, a unified negotiation with their counterparts in public universities for their welfare, fight for their rights within the institution, bring development to the institution, a voice that speak for all, voice for improved working environment and improve collective bargaining in private universities.

Research Question 3: What are the perceived effects of non-operation of unions on the welfare of lecturers in private universities?

Table 3: Mean scores and standard deviation analysis on perceived effects of non-operation of unions on the welfare of lecturers

S/N	Perceived effects of non-operation of unions on the welfare	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Leave lecturers at the mercy of their employees	3.02	.82	Agree
2.	Not able to negotiate their conditions of service	3.04	.79	Agree
3.	Remunerations are poor compared to their counterparts in public universities	3.04	.83	Agree
4.	Poor welfare condition	2.99	.82	Agree
5.	Inadequate working environment	2.98	.83	Agree
6.	Lack of commitment on the job	2.97	.82	Agree
7.	Fear of not losing job	3.00	.82	Agree
8.	Job oppression	3.01	.83	Agree

Table 3 shows mean scores and standard deviation analysis on perceived effects of non-operation of unions on the welfare of lecturers. Results in the table revealed that respondents agree with mean scores of 3.02, 3.04, 3.04, 2.99, 2.98, 2.97, 3.00 and 3.01 on leave lecturers at the mercy of their employees, not able to negotiate their conditions of service, remunerations are poor compared to their counterparts in public universities, poor welfare condition, inadequate working environment, lack of commitment on the job, fear of not losing job and job oppression respectively. Decisively, perceived effects of non-operation of unions on the welfare of lecturers include leaving lecturers at the mercy of their employees, not able to negotiate their conditions of service, remunerations are poor compared to their

counterparts in public universities, poor welfare condition, inadequate working environment, lack of commitment on the job, fear of not losing job and job oppression in private universities.

Hypothesis 1: Sex perceptions do not differ on how unionism affect the welfare of lecturers in private universities.

Table 4: t-test summary on sex perceptions do not differ on how unionism affect the welfare of lecturers

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Level of sig.	Df	t-cal.	t-crit.	Decision
Male	70	3.14	.85	.05	113	.97	±1.96	Not Sig.
Female	45	2.87	.87					

Table 4 shows t-test summary on sex perceptions do not differ on how unionism affect the welfare of lecturers. The result shows that male respondents were 70, mean score =3.14 and SD=.85 while female respondents were 45, mean score=2.87 and SD=.87. The t-calculated value of .97 was less than t-critical value of +1.96 at .05 level of significance on df value of 113. This revealed that the null hypothesis of sex perceptions does not differ on how unionism affect the welfare of lecturers was retained.

Hypothesis 2: Sex perception of lecturers in private universities do not differ on the operation of unions in private universities.

Table 5: t-test summary on sex perception of lecturers in private universities do not differ on the operation of unions

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Level of sig.	Df	t-cal.	t-crit.	Decision
Male	70	2.73	.80	.05	113	1.31	±1.96	Not Sig.
Female	45	3.27	.81					

Table 5 shows t-test summary on sex perception of lecturers in private universities do not differ on the operation of unions. The result shows that male respondents were 70, mean score =2.73 and SD=.80 while female respondents were 45, mean score=3.27 and SD=.81. The t-calculated value of 1.31 was less than t-critical value of ±1.96 at .05 level of significance on df value of 113. This revealed that the null hypothesis of sex perceptions of lecturers in private universities do not differ on the operation of unions was retained.

Hypothesis 3: Sex perceptions do not differ on perceived effects of non-operation of unions on the welfare of lecturers in private universities.

Table 6: t-test summary on sex perceptions do not differ on perceived effects of non-operation of unions on the welfare of lecturers

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Level of sig.	Df	t-cal.	t-crit.	Decision
Male	70	3.20	.88	.05	113	1.56	±1.96	Not Sig.
Female	45	2.81	.84					

Table 6 shows t-test summary on sex perception do not differ on perceived effects of non-operation of unions on the welfare of lecturers. The result shows that male respondents were 70, mean score =3.20 and SD=.88 while female respondents were 45, mean score=2.81 and SD=.84. The t-calculated value of 1.56 was less than t-critical value of +1.96 at .05 level of significance on df value of 113. This revealed that the null hypothesis of sex perceptions does not differ on perceived effects of non-operation of unions on the welfare of lecturers was retained.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Finding on how unionism affects welfare of lecturers shows that by improving workers’ wages, advance employment conditions, raise members’ social status, show interest in workers’ welfare, legal recognition to negotiate terms/conditions, struggle against unpopular employees’ policies, mobilize members to arid the general public on the need to resist employees’ action and enhance workplace communication in private universities. Hypothesis test exposed that sex perceptions does not differ on how unionism affect the welfare of lecturers in private universities. This finding supports Han [9] who emphasised on union membership to describe lecturers’ unionization and revealed that unions increase workers wellbeing [9]. Lipsky [10], Freeman [11], and Ehrenberg and Schwarz [12] discovered that teachers’ unions are related with higher incomes and that the union–non-union salary discrepancy is lesser among workers in public enterprise than in private enterprise. Orji and Kabiru [19] discovered a substantial relationship between non-trade unionism and work peace, academic productivity and growth of Private universities in Nigerian unlike public Universities; and unionism in Nigerian private universities do not disrupt students’ academic activities, which enhances student’s performance.

Finding on perception of lecturers in private universities on the operation of unions is that unionism should be allowed, lecturers should belong to the same union as their counterparts in public universities, a unified negotiation with their counterparts in public universities for their welfare, fight for their rights within the institution, bring development to the institution, a voice that speak for all, voice for improved working environment and improve collective bargaining in private universities. Hypothesis test exposed that sex perceptions of lecturers in private universities do not differ on the operation of unions in private universities. This finding agrees with Okecha [2] who maintained that the clash of interest among unions in university has affected the quality and integrity of the Ivory Tower. While Orji, et. al., [5] feels that the activities of unions have affected commitment and productivity of academic staff in the university.

Finding on perceived effects of non-operation of unions on the welfare of lecturers include leaving lecturers at the mercy of their employees, not able to negotiate their conditions of service, remunerations are poor compared to their counterparts in public universities, poor welfare condition, inadequate working environment, lack of commitment on the job, fear of not losing job and job oppression in private universities. Hypothesis test exposed that sex perceptions does not differ on perceived effects of non-operation of unions on the welfare of lecturers in private universities. This finding supports Okecha [2] who discovered that private universities hardly pay pension benefits, and so are unable to attract quality academics, who would normally want to have tenure. Odey and Sambe [3] who state that because proprietors of private universities do not allow unions, lecturers are forced to be more productive even with less pay than their colleagues in public universities.

CONCLUSION

Unionism is very important in any organisation, private universities inclusive. Unionism will help improve lecturers' wages and condition of services. It is the only channel of legal recognition to negotiate terms/conditions of employees' base on policies which is not convenient for lecturers. As a matter of fact, unionism will advance workplace communication in the institution. The above may be the reason respondents displayed a positive perception on the operation of unions in private universities. Lecturers in private universities wish that unionism should be allowed in their institutions just the same way it is operated in public universities with a unified negotiation for their welfare, and improve collective bargaining. However, the perceived effects of non-operation of unions on the welfare of lecturers will leave lecturers at the mercy of their employees, such that they will not be able to negotiate their conditions of service, remunerations, job oppression and will lead to inadequate working environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Unionism is the only legal means to voice out lecturers' opinions and intentions as such, private universities should allow the establishment of unions in their institutions.
2. Lecturers should belong to the same union as their counterparts in public universities since it is the prime way to enhance their condition of service.
3. To fight for their rights within the institutions, government should encourage private universities to allow unionism in their institutions.
4. Lack of commitment, inadequate working environment and job oppression are some of the characteristics on non-operation of unionism in the institution, thus as a matter of urgency, private universities should allow operation of unions in order to improve job commitment, work environment and reduce job oppression.

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