

# Industrial Relations Practices and Employee Productivity of the Health Care Industry in South-West, Nigeria

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**Abstract-** The underdevelopment of Nigeria's healthcare sector impairs equalities, with urban populations enjoying better access to healthcare than their rural counterparts. This disparity underscores the inadequacy of current industrial policies and programs to address Nigeria's myriad health challenges, declining industrial outputs specifically in the area of employee productivity. Low employee productivity among employees in Nigeria's healthcare sector is evident through various manifestations. Lengthy patient waiting times, often caused by understaffing and inefficient processes, highlight the strain on the system, leading to dissatisfaction and delays in care. This is compounded by a reduction in the quality of care delivered, as overworked and demotivated healthcare professionals struggle to maintain standards, potentially compromising patient safety. This study examined the effect of Industrial relations practices on employee productivity of the healthcare sector in Southwest, Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research design and the population was 942 union executives of eighteen selected hospitals from Southwest, Nigeria. A sample of 545 of the union executives was computed using Krejcie and Morgan formula. The study adopted proportionate distribution of the sample size across selected hospitals. A validated questionnaire was used to collect data. The Cronbach's alpha reliability for the constructs ranged from 0.71 to 0.80. a response rate of 86.2% was achieved for the selected hospitals in the Southwest, Nigeria. The research hypothesis was tested using the multiple regression analysis. The findings revealed that industrial relations practices had significant effect on employees' productivity ( $Adj.R^2 = 0.242$ ,  $F(5, 464) = 30.875$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The study concluded that industrial relations dimensions (trade unionism, collective bargaining, labour laws, employee participation, conflict resolution) has a significant effect on employee productivity of health care sector in southwest, Nigeria. This implies that that industrial relations dimensions exert a notable weight on employee productivity within the healthcare sector in southwest Nigeria. Therefore, the study recommends that Government and employers in the health sector should encourage sound industrial relations enhance employees' productivity. It is therefore imperative for organizations especially the health care sector to ensure sustainable policies that would enhance harmonious and productive work environment.

**Keywords:** Industrial Relations Practices, Trade Unionism, Collective Bargaining, Employee Participation, Labour Laws, Employee Productivity.

## INTRODUCTION

The health care services' being one of the fastest growing and most sought-after sectors in the world is also facing challenges due to decline in employee productivity rate. Unfortunately, there is global shortage of staffs in health care personnel as a result of covid-19 pandemic which has led to many taking time off due to exposure to the virus while some passed away from the illness (Zainal et al., 2023). According to the world health organization (WHO) estimation for health workforce density there is around 4.45 health workers per 1000 population in many countries of the world. It has also been projected that demand for health workers will rise to 80 million workers by the year 2030 according to Global Health Workforce Labour Market (Liu et al., 2017).

The link between health performance and employee productivity has been long studied by economist and development experts. Several studies (Ojo & Adedayo, 2021; Arugu & Wosu, 2020; Haipeter et al., 2021; Arimie & Oronsanye, 2020; Barikui, 2019; Ugwu et al., 2021; Akuh, 2016; Yusuf 2020; Fejoh et al., 2022) have been conducted on industrial relations and workers productivity. Most of these studies have been conducted across various sectors such education and manufacturing both internationally and locally with issues like trade union campaign conflict management and industrial harmony forming the major parts of the conclusion. However, nothing much has been done on industrial relations practice and employees' productivity in the Nigeria health sector. This has made the gaps in literature to be worthy of investigation. The World Health Organization report (2015) noted that health workers are physically and mentally more energetic and robust so they are less likely to use work due to illness either of themselves or their families.

The inadequate programs and policies designed to tackle the several health issues in Nigeria have contributed little or no improvement in the health care sectors and have led to low industrial output, organizational performance which is the main mover of the economy moving from high to low productivity everyday (Mba *et al.*, 2023).

To this end, this study examined the effect of industrial relations on employee productivity in the health sector in south west, Nigeria.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Employees' Productivity

Singh *et al.* (2022) defined employees' productivity as time spent actively by employees on task that requires execution and production. In related term, employees' productivity indicates the extent to which the adoption of technology minimizes the time and effort required to complete a specific (Ozuem, 2021). Productivity is very significant concepts in business world as it contributes to the successfulness of an organization (Almaamari & Alaswad, 2021). Productivity is defined as the joint and shared efforts done by both employees and managers for the aim of enhancing the performance of each individual. It is also involved the comparison between the input against output in all sectors (Almaamari & Alaswad, 2021). Productivity is assets of which a person shows in relation to his job or in order words, amount of efficiency gained due to person job type (training, producing and servicing). It is defined either as skill of a person in doing his job and task. Also, this study relates or qualifies productivity to means of job performance (Ezeamama, 2019). Arugu and Wosu (2020) defined that productivity means organization being productive, fertile or efficient to the extent that there is positive synergy or collaborative relationship between the union and management targeted towards the realization or achievement of organizational goals. equipment.

### Industrial Relations Practices

Okaka *et al.* (2011) defines industrial relations as the pattern of interaction or relationship between employer and management on the one hand, and employee and/ or trade unions on the other, including the activities of government in supervising and controlling the industrial relations system. Simply put, industrial relations refer to the interaction between employers and the employees and the regulation of such interaction. In relation to the above, Ayogu (2016) defined Industrial Relations as the pattern of contract of partnership between the employers or management on the one hand and workers on the other, including government actions in regulating and managing the system of industrial relations. Bidwaik (2021), Industrial relations is involved in the relationship between workmen and organizations, the mechanism created for solving workmen issues, grievances with the process of resolution if any disputes arise Zeb-obipi (2016) after analyzing different definitions from various authors, defined industrial relations as a set of interaction at the workplace mediated upon employment contract and involving work parties and their representatives in job regulations. This definition identifies set of interactions, workplace relations, employment contracts, job regulations and work parties as key elements of industrial relations. The following paragraphs will address the dimensions of industrial realtions practices, namely, trade unionism, collective bargaining, labour laws, employee participation and

### Trade Unionism

Fajana in Akut *et al.* (2018) argued that trade union is an association of workers located in an employment situation. The primary objective is to improve the terms and conditions of employment of members with the employers through the process of collective bargaining. In the same vein, Otobo (2005) sees trade union as a continuous organization of employees that seeks to maintain and improve the terms and conditions of employment through collective bargaining representative with the employer (from which it remains autonomous) and through other means". Trade union may also be conceptually defined as any organized group of workers which relates with employers on various issues related to the conditions of employment of members (Okoklie & Agbefe, 2020). By these it is understood that trade unions generally emerge from the efforts of workers to seek an improvement of existing conditions through collective actions. According to Akintunde (2021) trade union is referred to as a group of workers either of the same or different trades who join together to bargain with employers using the principle of collective bargaining for fair wages and better working conditions. This definition also focused on collective bargaining as part of the major features and roles of Trade union.

### Collective Bargaining

collective bargaining from legal perspectives is defined by Adebayo and Toyosi (2021) as a dialogue or collective negotiation between the employer's representative and workers representative with a view to reaching a collective agreement on the under negotiation. In similar way, Visser (2016) defined collective bargaining as a process that involved negotiation between trade union and employers or employer's organization to determine terms and conditions of employment. Some of the features of collective bargaining according to Akintunde (2021) revealed that it is collective on behalf of collective entities, balance of power between the parties, and voluntary participation by parties, requires representatives, bipartite process which involves at least two parties. However, collective bargaining comes at a cost,

requires governance duties, rigid agreements, difficulty in adjusting to terms and conditions of employment, overwhelming complexities of rules, does not guarantee a good deal for either party and it is not always a fair representation (Jacobs & Munder, 2022).

### **Labour Laws**

the field of labour law plays a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics of industrial relations in Nigeria, as it establishes a legal structure to regulate the interactions between employers and employees (David & Nwiyii, 2023). The document establishes the rights and obligations of both parties involved, thereby ensuring equitable treatment, promoting the rights of workers, and facilitating amicable workplace relations. The labour law in Nigeria encompasses a comprehensive set of legal principles, statutes, regulations, and precedents that establish the framework for regulating the interactions and dynamics between employers and employees. The document delineates the entitlements, responsibilities, and commitments of both parties involved in the employment association, while establishing a structure for equitable employment protocols, working circumstances, and the resolution of conflicts. The Labour Act is the principal legislation governing employment relations in Nigeria. Its application is limited to employees engaged under a contract of manual labour or clerical work in private and public sector (Adeshina et al., 2017). The legislation sets forth a set of baseline criteria for employment, encompassing equitable remuneration, reasonable duration of work, and secure occupational environments.

### **Employee Participation**

Employee participation according to Schussler et al. (2018) who argues that decision making is sometimes difficult for both individual and group, though the outcome depends on organizations, where the stakes are considerable and the impact is widespread. Employee participative decision making concerned with leader behavior that managers perform in involving their employees in making decision (Kim & Patel, 2017). It is deals with shared decision making in the work environment between managers and subordinates. It explains how businesses can improve their performance by cultivating employee interest and dedication. The forms of participation were consultative participation, short-term participation, informal participation, representative participation (Mohammed & Ibrahim, 2020). Advantages of employees' participation in decision-making include increased employee morale, job satisfaction, and commitment to the organization. When employees have a say in decisions that affect them, they feel valued and engaged, leading to higher levels of motivation and productivity (Chimaobi & Chikamnele, 2020). Moreover, participation allows organizations to tap into the diverse knowledge and perspectives of their employees, leading to better decision outcomes and innovative solutions (Ugwu, Okoroji & Chukwu, 2018).

### **Conflict Resolution**

Conflict resolution encompasses processes/strategies that aim to resolve disagreements between employees and employers (Tumwebaze et al., 2020). Wainaina et al. (2020) argue that these strategies include avoidance, compromising, accommodating, collaboration, and competing. According to Tumwebaze et al. (2020) conflict resolution is defined as the measure required initiating preventive actions against conflicts. They further suggest that managing conflict involves implementing appropriate measures to prevent the problem from recurring. Umair (2018) also defines conflict resolution as the reduction, elimination, or termination of conflicts, and negotiation, bargaining, mediation, and arbitration often fall into this category. According to Donkor (2016), conflict resolution within a business environment typically involves effective communication, problem-solving abilities, and negotiation skills to realign focus with the company's overall goals. Bankovskaya (2017) states that conflict resolution minimizes negative outcome and promote positive outcomes, fostering learning within an organization.

### **Theoretical Review**

This study was underpinned by the pluralist theoretical perspective. Pluralism perceives organization as being made up of powerful and divergent sub- grouped interest groups. Each of the interested groups is believed to have its own legitimate loyalties, objectives and leaders. Scholars like Bain and Clegg (1974) supported this theory in their various works. The two key groups in industry are the Trade Union and the Management (Akintunde, 2021). As result, it is believed that conflict is a natural result of the nature of the relationship hence the management of the relationship requires less of command, control and enforcing activities. Better and enduring relationship would be archived by the process of persuasion, coordination, negotiation, concession, compromise meditation and arbitration. Trade unions are deemed to be legitimate representatives of employees (Rose, 2008). Also, collective bargaining could, if well managed, be channeled towards peaceful evolutions and desirable change. The focus is conflict the resolution (not how conflict is being generated) through the institution of jobs regulation. This perspective is believed to be consistent with the norms of modern democratic societies, more realistic and scientific (Akintunde, 2021).

Pluralist theory emphasizes the representative function of management and trade unions, and it reinforces the value (and legitimacy) of collective bargaining as an institutionalized means of resolving the conflicts or disputes. Pluralists recognize organizations within management and within unions as legitimate (Pimlott & Farham, 1990). They believe that management functions are to coordinate, communicate and persuade rather than control or demand. Not to be confused with the Marxist theory, radical theory sees Industrial relations as a necessary (but not ideal) result of employees protecting themselves from powerful bug business. Radicals believe that profit-hungry corporations have regards (aside from and are willing to profit off of them at any available opportunity).

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### Empirical Review

Previous studies have found a positive relationship between industry relations practices and employees' productivity (Arugu & Wosu, 2020; Barikui, 2019). Similarly, Nwankwo et al. (2023), in their study on the effect of industrial relations practices on the productivity of the public sector in Nigeria, reported that industrial relations practices have a positive and significant effect on the productivity of the public sector in Nigeria. Additionally, findings also revealed that career development practice has a positive and significant effect on organizational market share in the Nigerian public sector, while work-life balance practice has a positive and significant effect on organizational total quality in the Nigerian public sector. In a related study, Oguwa (2022) found that staffing and promotions, employee training and development, performance appraisal, job analysis and job description, and finally the employee reward system as components of employee relations strategies significantly influence organizational performance, and therefore various strategies to strengthen these components of employee relations strategies should be put in place.

Furthermore, the Kyasimiire (2021) study revealed a compelling consensus, with 80% of respondents strongly concurring and 20% agreeing that employee relations exert a discernible impact on organizational performance. This assertion finds support within the research domains of Obiekwe (2018), and Ukpanta (2020), as their respective inquiries corroborated the positive nexus between robust industrial relations and pivotal performance indicators like employees' loyalty and commitment. Furthermore, the discourse continues among scholars such as Worlu et al. (2016) and Waktola (2019), who propose an intriguing perspective suggesting that the relationship between industrial relations and organizational performance manifests as an intricate indirect phenomenon, adding another layer of depth to this intricate interplay. Additionally, Adwoa-Ackon (2018) investigated the influence of employee relations on the productivity of selected publishing firms in Accra Metropolis. Specifically, the study findings showed that there has been a high level of productivity among the selected publishing firms in the Accra Metropolis over the past two years.

Based on the foregoing, the study thus hypothesized that:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Industrial relations practices have no significant effect on employee productivity in the Nigeria health sector

### Research Conceptual Model

Industrial Relations Practices



**Figure 1: Conceptual Model (industrial relations practices and employee productivity)**

**Source:** Author’s Research Model (2023)

The figure above presented the conceptual model based upon the review of literature and it showed the effect of industrial relations practices (trade unionism, collective bargaining, labour laws, employee participation and conflict resolution) on employee productivity

**METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a survey research design and the population was 942 union executives of eighteen selected hospitals from Southwest, Nigeria. A sample of 545 of the union executives was computed using Krejcie and Morgan formula. The study adopted proportionate distribution of the sample size across selected hospitals. A validated questionnaire was used to collect data. The Cronbach’s alpha reliability for the constructs ranged from 0.71 to 0.80. a response rate of 86.2% was achieved for the selected hospitals in the Southwest, Nigeria. Data were analyzed using description and inferential statistics. The research hypothesis was tested using multiple regression statistics. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using the Cronbach’s alpha correlation coefficient with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 23 and Cronbach coefficient of 0.7 and above was considered adequate (Ellis, 2021).

**Model Specification**

X = Independent Variable

Y = Dependent Variable

Where:

X = Industrial Relations Practice (IRP)

Y = Employee Productivity (EP)

Where:

$X = (x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4, x_5)$

$x_1$  = Trade Unionism

$x_2$  = Collective Bargaining

$x_3$  = Labour Law

$x_4$  = Employees Participation

$x_5$  = Conflict Resolution

$Y = f(x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4, x_5)$

$EP = f(TU, CB, LL, EP, CR) \dots \dots \dots (1)$

**Hypothesis**

$EP = f(TU, CB, LL, EP, CR)$

$EP = \alpha_0 + \beta_1 TU + \beta_2 CB + \beta_3 LL + \beta_4 EP + \beta_5 CR + e_i \dots \dots \dots (1)$

These are the expectations about the existing relationship between the variables – dependent and independent. This refers to how industrial relations practice relates to employee productivity of the health sector in Nigeria using union executives of selected hospitals in southwest as shown below:

**Table 1: A priori Expectations and Decision rule**

H <sub>0</sub>	Models	A priori expectations IF:
H <sub>02</sub>	Y= a <sub>0</sub> + β <sub>1</sub> x <sub>1</sub> + β <sub>2</sub> x <sub>2</sub> + β <sub>3</sub> x <sub>3</sub> + β <sub>4</sub> x <sub>4</sub> + β <sub>5</sub> x <sub>5</sub> + β <sub>6</sub> x <sub>6</sub> + e <sub>i</sub> ... (2)	p ≤ 0.05, β <sub>i</sub> ≠ 0; H <sub>02</sub> will be rejected.

Source: Author’s Computation (2024)

**DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

H<sub>02</sub>: Industrial relations practices have no significant effect on employees’ productivity.

**Table 2: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for effect of Industrial Relation Practices dimensions on Employee’s Productivity**

N	Model	B	T	Sig.	ANOVA (Sig.)	R	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F (5, 464)
470	(Constant)	5.912	3.887	.000	0.001 <sup>b</sup>	0.500 <sup>a</sup>	0.242	30.875
	Trade Unionism	.198	3.612	.000				
	Collective Bargaining	.063	1.293	.197				
	Labour Laws	.139	2.430	.015				
	Employee Participation	.047	.809	.419				
	Conflict Resolution	.331	5.485	.000				
	a. Dependent Variable: Employees' Productivity							
b. Predictors: (Constant), Conflict Resolution, Collective Bargaining, Labour Laws, Trade Unionism, Employee Participation								

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey, 2024

**Interpretation**

Table 2 showed the multiple regression analysis results for the effect of industrial relation practices on employees’ productivity of selected hospitals in South West, Nigeria. The results showed that trade unionism (β = 0.198, t = 3.612, p<0.05), labour laws (β = 0.139, t = 2.430, p<0.05) and conflict resolution (β = 0.331t = 5.485, p<0.05). all have positive and significant effects on employee’s productivity of the selected hospital in Southwest in Nigeria. In contrast, collective bargaining (β = 0.063, t = 1.293, p>0.05), employee participation (β = 0.139t = 2.430, p>0.05) have a positive but insignificant effect on employees’ productivity of selected hospital in Southwest, Nigeria. The results of the multiple regression analysis revealed that three of the industrial relation practices (trade unionism, labour laws, and conflict resolution) have positive and significant effect on employee’s productivity of the selected hospital in Southwest, Nigeria. This suggests that trade unionism, labour laws, and conflict resolution are important predictors of employee’s productivity of the selected hospital in Southwest in Nigeria. Also, effective industrial relation practices, particularly in trade unionism, labor laws, employees’ participations, and conflict resolution play a crucial role in enhancing employees' productivity within the organisation.

The correlation R was 0.500, indicated a moderate positive correlation exists between the combined industrial relation practices (trade unionism, collective bargaining, labour laws, employee participation, and conflict resolution) and employees’ productivity of the selected hospital in Southwest, Nigeria. The coefficient of multiple determination (Adj.R2) was 0.242 indicated that about 24% variance in employee productivity of the selected hospital in Southwest, Nigeria can be accounted for by the proxies of industrial relation practices while the remaining 76% changes that occurs is accounted for by other variables not captured in the model. This implies that industrial relation practices (trade unionism, collective bargaining, labour laws, employee participation, and conflict resolution) together explain a moderate proportion of the variability in employees' productivity in the selected hospitals. The predictive and prescriptive multiple regression models are thus expressed:

$$EC = 5.912 + 0.198TU + 0.063CB + 0.139LL + 0.047EP + 0.331CR + U_i \text{-----Eqni (Predictive Model)}$$

$$EC = 5.912 + 0.198TU + 0.139LL + 0.047EP + 0.331CR + U_i \text{----Eqni (Prescriptive Model)}$$

Where:

EC = Employees Productivity  
 TU = Trade Unionism  
 CB = Collective Bargaining  
 LL = Labour Law  
 EP = Employees Participation  
 CR = Conflict Resolution

The regression model indicated that if industrial relation practices dimensions were held constant at zero, employee productivity of the selected hospital in Nigeria would be 5.912 indicating that in the absence of industrial relation practices dimensions, employee productivity of the selected hospital in Nigeria would be 5.912, indicating positive employee productivity without the industrial relation practices. From the predictive model, only three dimensions of the industrial relation practices (trade unionism, labour laws, conflict resolution) have significant effect on the employee productivity of the selected hospital in Southwest, Nigeria and contributed significantly to the prediction. Therefore, collective bargaining was not prescribed for the organisations. From the prescriptive model, it is observed that when industrial relation practices, particularly trade unionism, labour laws, employee participation, and conflict resolution are improved by one unit, employee productivity would also increase 0.198, 0.139, 0.047, and 0.331 units respectively. This suggests that higher levels of perceived effectiveness in trade unionism practices, implementation of labour laws, employee's participation, and conflict resolution practices are associated with higher levels of employee productivity. Overall, regression results in Tables 1 reveal that trade unionism had the highest effect on employee productivity compared to the other industrial relation practices. Collective bargaining ( $\beta = 0.063$ ,  $p = 0.091$ ) and Employees participation ( $\beta = 0.047$ ,  $p = 0.419$ ) have a positive effect on employees' productivity, but it is insignificant. This indicates that while there is a trend towards higher employee productivity with effective collective bargaining and employee's participation, the relationship is insignificant and not as strong as with the other variables and it is insignificant. Therefore, selected hospitals in the Southwest should consider further efforts to strengthen collective bargaining to maximize their impact on employee productivity.

The F-statistics ( $df = 5, 464$ ) = 28.955 at  $p < 0.05$  indicated that the overall model is statistically significant for predicting the effect of industrial relation practices on employee productivity. This implies that the regression model is a good fit for forecasting the effect of industrial relation practices on employee productivity in the selected hospitals in Southwest, Nigeria. Therefore, the model can be used to make accurate predictions about the effects of changes in industrial relation practices variables, particularly (trade unionism, labour laws, employee participation and conflict resolution) on employee productivity. This information can be useful for decision-makers in the selected hospitals, as it provides insights on which industrial relation practices to prioritize to enhance their employee productivity. Further, the managers of selected hospitals in Southwest, Nigeria should focus on improving and maintaining positive industrial relations practices, as they have a direct effect on employees' attitudes and productivity levels, which in turn can lead to improved employee performance. Based on these results, the null hypothesis one ( $H_{02}$ ) which states that industrial relations practices have no significant effect on employees' productivity was rejected.

### Discussion of Findings

The results of the multiple regressions for Industrial relations practices and employee productivity of healthcare sector in Southwest, Nigeria established that Industrial relations dimension have a positive and significant effect on employees' productivity. Conceptually, Industrial Relation is seen as any relationship between an employees and employers and unions representing, them in a productive field. (Ullah, 2022) some of the activities of industrial relations system is to moderate the excess of pluralist and divergent group interest that create disturbance and disruption in the workflow by ensure that all stakeholders interest is adequately covered with the production output (Arugu & Wosu, 2020).

This result find supports in prior industrial relations practices. For instance, studies conducted by Adwoa-Ackon, (2018) Ullah et al. (2019) through regression analysis conducted revealed a positive and significant relationship between industrial relationship and productivity in various sectors. Factors like work life balance working conditions and career development practices were considered has some of Industrial relations dimensions that had positive significant relationship with productivity. Similarly, Battu and Rao (2021) Lelo et al. (2020), Waktola (2019) found positive and significant relationship between industrial relations and workers productivity with organization settings.

Similarly, Nwankwo et al (2023), in their study on the effect industrial relations practices have a positive and significant effect on the productivity of the public sector in Nigeria. Finding of the study provided support for the Marxian theoretical perspectives and pluralist theoretical perspectives industrial relations practices and employees' productivity which are part of the major issue of discussion in this study reflects outcome of industrial relations. It is believed that positive change and employees' productivity can only be achieved through collective bargaining and negotiations, concessions and compromise between in unions and managements, pressure groups and government.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study concluded that industrial relations dimensions (trade unionism, collective bargaining, labour laws, employee participation, conflict resolution) has a significant effect on employee productivity of health care sector in southwest, Nigeria. This implies that that industrial relations dimensions exert a notable influence on employee productivity within the healthcare sector in southwest Nigeria.

Therefore, the study recommends that Government and employers in the health sector should encourage sound industrial relations enhance employees' productivity. It is therefore imperative for organizations especially the health care sector to ensure sustainable policies that would enhance harmonious and productive work environment.

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