



Trade Unionism and Workers' Welfare: An Empirical Analysis of Wage Negotiations and Working Conditions in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of trade union activities on workers' welfare in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, focusing on wage negotiations and working conditions. Using a mixed-methods approach, data from 387 civil servants affiliated with the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE) were analysed. Findings show that unions significantly influence wages, with 80.93% of respondents acknowledging their role in salary negotiations ($\chi^2 = 159.31, p < 0.05$). However, their impact on working conditions was minimal, with 93.94% reporting dissatisfaction due to delayed promotions, unsafe environments, and inadequate healthcare ($\chi^2 = 5.94, p > 0.05$). Challenges such as politicised leadership and employer coercion hinder union effectiveness. The study, grounded in the liberal-pluralist framework, highlights unions' limited enforcement power in occupational welfare. The research recommends stronger labour law enforcement, depoliticised leadership, and enhanced worker education, among others.

Keywords: Trade unions, workers' welfare, wage negotiations, working conditions, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Introduction

Trade unions have long been recognised as critical institutions for advancing workers' rights and fostering equitable labour relations globally. In developing economies like Nigeria, their role is particularly vital in mitigating exploitation, advocating for improved working conditions, and negotiating fair compensation amid systemic economic and institutional challenges. Historically, unions have driven socio-economic reforms by challenging oppressive policies and advocating for worker-centric legislation. In Nigeria, the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) has been instrumental in reversing anti-worker policies and safeguarding the interests of both employed and unemployed citizens (Okafor, 2020). However, contemporary dynamics, including politicisation of unions and employer interference, have raised questions about their efficacy in fulfilling their core mandates, particularly in regions like Akwa Ibom State, where labour relations have deteriorated since 2015.

A central mandate of trade unions is to negotiate wages and salaries that reflect the economic realities and dignity of labour. Scholars such as Nwoko (2019) emphasise that unions exist to protect workers' economic interests, ensuring remuneration aligns with productivity and living standards. Despite this, Akwa Ibom State has witnessed persistent conflicts over delayed salaries, unpaid promotion arrears, and non-implementation of wage agreements between public sector workers and the state government. Since 2015, reports indicate that the state government has frequently disregarded labour laws, using tactics such as salary stoppages and coercive negotiations to undermine union demands (Omolo, 2019). This raises critical concerns about how union actions—or inactions—influence wage outcomes for employees, particularly in a volatile economic climate marked by inflation and declining public sector investment.

Similarly, trade unions are tasked with ensuring safe, dignified, and enabling working conditions. Beyond wages, employee welfare encompasses job security, training opportunities, healthcare, and workplace safety—elements enshrined in Nigeria's labour laws, including Section 173(1) of the 1999 Constitution. Studies by Dursha (2019) and Ugo and Sebastine (2020) posit that effective welfare provisions enhance morale, loyalty, and productivity. Yet, in Akwa Ibom, workers allege systemic neglect: promotions are delayed, training programmes suspended, and occupational hazards overlooked. Compounding this is the alleged politicisation of union leadership, where leaders prioritise employer interests over member welfare to avoid victimisation (Obiekwe & Obibhunun, 2019). Such dynamics weaken collective bargaining, leaving workers vulnerable to exploitative practices and deteriorating workplace environments.

While existing literature underscores unions' theoretical role in advancing worker welfare, there is limited empirical focus on how their activities directly shape specific outcomes like wages and working conditions in subnational contexts like Akwa Ibom. Previous studies highlight structural challenges—politicisation, employer

coercion, and economic instability—but fail to critically assess their tangible effects on employees' economic well-being and workplace dignity. This gap necessitates a focused inquiry into two pivotal dimensions: the linkage between union actions and wage outcomes and the correlation between union strategies and improvements in working conditions.

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to critically evaluate the efficacy of trade unions in Akwa Ibom State by investigating the effect of trade union actions on employees' wages and salaries in Akwa Ibom State and determining the impact of trade union activities on employees' working conditions in Akwa Ibom State.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Trade unions in Akwa Ibom State, particularly within public institutions such as the civil service, universities, and healthcare sectors, face significant challenges in advocating for equitable wages and salaries for workers. Despite constitutional provisions and service rules mandating timely promotions, salary increments, and pension benefits, employees endure prolonged delays in promotion implementation, unpaid arrears, and stagnant wage structures that fail to align with rising inflation. The politicisation of union leadership and coercive tactics by the state government—including threats of termination and unilateral suspension of negotiated agreements—has weakened unions' capacity to demand fair compensation. Consequently, workers grapple with deteriorating purchasing power, with over 75% living below the poverty line despite full-time employment. This raises critical questions about the efficacy of trade union actions in securing wage justice, as compromised negotiations and fragmented solidarity undermine their ability to counteract exploitative economic policies and improve workers' financial well-being.

Equally pressing is the unions' diminishing influence over working conditions in Akwa Ibom's public sector. Job insecurity, inadequate training programmes, and hazardous workplace environments persist, exacerbated by management's disregard for occupational safety standards and welfare provisions. Unions, historically tasked with enforcing dignified working conditions, now face co-option by employers, with leaders prioritising political patronage over member welfare. For instance, staff training is rarely needs-based, promotions are arbitrarily denied, and healthcare benefits remain inaccessible. These systemic failures have demoralised workers, leading to reduced productivity, industrial unrest, and a culture of disengagement. The erosion of union autonomy thus highlights a critical gap in safeguarding employees' rights to safe, enabling workplaces, necessitating an inquiry into how union activities—or their absence—directly shape the quality of working conditions and overall service delivery in the state.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This research aims at attaining the following objectives:

- i. Examine the effect of trade union's actions on employees' wages and salaries in Akwa Ibom state.
- ii. Determine the impact of the trade union activities on employee's working conditions in Akwa Ibom state.

1.4 Research Questions

- i. What is the effect of trade union's actions on employees' wages and salaries in Akwa Ibom State?
- ii. What is the impact of trade union activities on employee's working conditions in Akwa Ibom State?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

- i. Trade union's actions tend to have significant effect on employees' wages and salaries in Akwa Ibom state.
- ii. Trade union activities are likely to affect employee's working conditions in Akwa Ibom state.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study holds critical relevance for policymakers, particularly the Akwa Ibom State government, by providing empirical insights into how trade union actions influence wage structures and working conditions in the public sector. Findings on the correlation between union activities and employees' wages will inform policies aimed at ensuring fair compensation, reducing industrial disputes, and aligning salaries with economic realities. Similarly, evidence on the impact of unions on workplace conditions will guide reforms to enhance occupational safety, job security, and staff welfare, fostering a motivated and productive workforce. Such outcomes could strengthen government-union collaborations, ensuring compliance with labour laws and improving service delivery across state institutions.

In academics, the study bridges gaps in literature by focusing on subnational labour dynamics in Nigeria, particularly the under-researched nexus between union efficacy, wage justice, and workplace dignity in Akwa Ibom State. It contributes to discourses on labour economics and industrial relations, offering a framework for future research on union strategies in developing economies. Scholars, activists, and labour organisations will benefit from its findings, which highlight systemic challenges and opportunities for revitalising union roles in advancing equitable socio-economic outcomes for workers.

Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Literature

2.1.1 Trade Unionism

A trade union is an organised association of workers formed to protect and advance their collective interests, particularly in negotiating wages, improving working conditions, and ensuring equitable treatment (Thomas, 2019). Central to this concept is the union's role as a mediator between employees and employers, leveraging collective bargaining to address disparities in compensation, job security, and workplace safety (Kochan, Katz, & McKersie, 1986). Freeman and Medoff (1984) emphasise that unions amplify workers' voices, enabling them to negotiate higher wages and resist exploitative practices—a critical function in contexts like Nigeria, where weak labour protections exacerbate income inequality.

Trade unions also play a pivotal role in shaping working conditions. Collins (2018) defines unions as structured entities that use advocacy and dialogue to influence policies on occupational safety, training, and promotions. In developing economies, unions often counterbalance employer dominance by institutionalising grievance mechanisms and enforcing compliance with labour standards (Budd, 2004). The Nigerian Labour Act (2004) mandates unions to safeguard workers' rights, including timely payment of salaries and adherence to occupational health guidelines. However, studies reveal that union effectiveness in Nigeria is frequently undermined by fragmented leadership and governmental coercion (Okafor, 2020). For instance, in Akwa Ibom State, public sector workers report delayed promotions and inadequate training, highlighting a disconnect between union mandates and outcomes (NLC, 2019). This underscores the need to evaluate how union actions directly impact wage equity and workplace dignity—a gap this study addresses.

2.1.2 Activities of Trade Unions

Trade unions engage in strategic actions to address wage disparities and improve working conditions, aligning with their core mandate of advocating for workers' rights. According to Mwathe et al. (2019), unions seek to balance power dynamics between employers and employees through collective bargaining, a mechanism critical to negotiating equitable wages and salaries. Armstrong (2018) submits that unions intentionally represent workers' economic interests to employers, often leveraging formal agreements to secure wage increments tied to productivity and inflation. This aligns with the study's first objective, as union-led negotiations directly influence salary structures, particularly in contexts like Akwa Ibom State, where stagnant wages persist despite rising living costs (NLC, 2019).

Unions also prioritise improving workplace conditions, a focus central to the study's second objective. Griswold (2020) opines that unions institutionalise job standards, advocating for safer environments, timely promotions, and training

programmes. For instance, Jepkorir (2019) highlights union efforts to negotiate work arrangements that align employee productivity with fair compensation and occupational safety protocols. However, when dialogue fails, unions resort to strikes or protests to pressure employers—a tactic documented in Nigeria's public sector to address hazardous working conditions and unpaid benefits (Okafor, 2020). Furthermore, Pencavel (2019) notes that political engagement enables unions to lobby for labour-friendly policies, such as minimum wage legislation, though such activities risk diluting their focus on immediate workplace reforms. These activities underscore unions' dual role in shaping both economic and occupational outcomes for workers, though their efficacy remains contingent on institutional autonomy and member solidarity.

2.1.3 Trade Unionism and Workers' Welfare: The Nigerian Experience

Trade unions in Nigeria, particularly in Akwa Ibom State, play a pivotal role in advocating for wage equity and improved working conditions. According to scholars, unions emerged historically to counter exploitative labour practices, with early unions like the Civil Services Union (1912) focusing on workers' welfare (Collins, 2018). The Nigerian Labour Act (2004) institutionalised collective bargaining, enabling unions to negotiate salaries, promotions, and workplace safety. However, in Akwa Ibom, stagnant wages persist despite rising inflation, with unions often constrained by political interference and employer coercion (NLC, 2019). For instance, delayed promotions and unpaid arrears reflect systemic neglect of workers' contractual rights, undermining their socioeconomic stability. And Udoh (2025) submits that reward systems play a critical role in enhancing productivity, motivation, and job satisfaction in organisations.

The Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC) remain central to harmonising labour relations. Yet, scholars lament the politicisation of unions, where leaders prioritise political alliances over member welfare (Ugo & Sebastine, 2020). This has eroded trust, particularly in Akwa Ibom, where unions struggle to negotiate effectively amid threats of termination and unilateral policy shifts by the state government. Collective bargaining, intended to resolve disputes over wages and conditions, often falters due to weak institutional frameworks and fragmented solidarity among workers. Such challenges highlight the disconnect between union mandates and their capacity to safeguard welfare in contexts marked by economic precarity.

2.1.4 Trade Unions' Contributions to Harmonious Industrial Relations

Trade unions contribute to organisational growth by fostering industrial harmony through structured dialogue. Otobo and Omole (2018) submit that unions enhance productivity by resolving disputes and advocating for fair working conditions. In Nigeria, collective agreements have historically reduced arbitrary dismissals and ensured job security, directly impacting workers' morale. For example, unions like

PENGASSAN have negotiated safer workplaces and timely promotions, aligning with broader goals of equitable labour practices.

However, in Akwa Ibom, union efficacy is diluted by politicised leadership and employer dominance. While unions theoretically amplify workers' voices, their ability to influence wage structures or enforce occupational safety remains limited. Scholars argue that unions' dual role as negotiators and political actors often compromises their focus on immediate welfare needs (Muya & Simotwo, 2019). Despite these challenges, effective unions indirectly stimulate productivity by institutionalising grievance mechanisms and fostering mutual respect between workers and employers. This underscores their potential to bridge gaps in labour relations, provided they retain autonomy from external pressures.

2.1.5 Trade Union Challenges in Nigeria

Trade unions in Nigeria face systemic challenges that undermine their capacity to secure equitable wages and improve working conditions. According to scholars, political interference and partisan agendas among union leaders significantly dilute their effectiveness. Okojie (2021) submits that union officials often prioritise political ambitions over member welfare, leading to fractured negotiations with employers. For instance, in Akwa Ibom State, such politicisation has resulted in stalled wage agreements and unresolved promotion arrears, directly impacting employees' financial stability. Similarly, external management of unions—where non-members assume leadership roles—exacerbates distrust, as these leaders lack commitment to workers' interests, further weakening collective bargaining outcomes (Okojie, 2021).

Inter-union rivalry and fragmentation further cripple efforts to advocate for better working conditions. Gangurde (2019) opines that competition among unions erodes solidarity, allowing employers to exploit divisions and disregard safety protocols or training needs. In Akwa Ibom, fragmented unions struggle to address hazards like inadequate healthcare access or delayed training programmes. Public resentment, particularly toward unions like ASUU over prolonged strikes, also diminishes societal support for labour demands and leads to reduced pressure on governments to address wage stagnation or workplace safety. These challenges highlight a critical disconnect between union activities and their intended impact on workers' welfare, underscoring the need for structural reforms to realign union priorities with the objectives of wage justice and occupational dignity.

While existing literature acknowledges the role of trade unions in enhancing workers' welfare through collective bargaining, limited empirical attention has been paid to the direct impact of union activities on wage structures and working conditions in subnational contexts like Akwa Ibom State. Prior studies broadly affirm unions' capacity to negotiate salaries and improve occupational safety (Freeman & Medoff, 1984; Budd, 2004). However, there is scant evidence on how politicisation, employer

coercion, and inter-union fragmentation—prevalent in Akwa Ibom—undermine unions' efficacy in securing equitable compensation or enforcing safer workplaces.

For instance, despite constitutional provisions for wage reviews and promotions, Akwa Ibom's public sector workers report stagnant salaries and delayed promotions, suggesting a disconnect between union mandates and outcomes. Similarly, while unions globally prioritise occupational safety, there is no localised analysis of how union actions (or inactions) correlate with hazardous working environments in the state's institutions. This study addresses these gaps by critically evaluating the causal relationship between union strategies and wage outcomes, alongside their role in mitigating workplace risks—an underexplored nexus in Nigeria's labour discourse.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the liberal-pluralist theory (Flanders & Fox, 1970) as its primary framework to analyse how trade union activities influence wages and working conditions in Akwa Ibom State. The theory posits that industrial relations involve multiple stakeholders—unions, employers, and the government—each pursuing distinct interests. According to Dunlop (1958), these groups engage in negotiation and compromise to achieve equilibrium, a process central to collective bargaining. For instance, unions negotiate wages and safety standards, employers prioritise productivity, and the state mediates to ensure economic stability. This aligns with the study's objectives, as it underscores how union strategies (e.g., strikes, dialogues) shape wage outcomes and workplace safety through power-balancing mechanisms.

The theory further submits that conflict is inherent but manageable through institutionalized dialogue (Haralambos & Holborn, 2018). In Akwa Ibom, where unions face politicization and employer coercion, the theory explains why fragmented negotiations often fail to secure equitable salaries or enforce occupational safeguards. By framing unions as counterweights to employer dominance, the theory contextualizes their role in mitigating exploitation—a key concern in Nigeria's public sector.

The liberal-pluralist lens is apt for this study, as it emphasises unions' capacity to negotiate wages and conditions through structured bargaining. However, it also highlights systemic barriers—such as weak institutional frameworks and power imbalances—that hinder unions in Akwa Ibom from fulfilling their mandates. This theoretical alignment enables a critical assessment of how union actions (or inactions) directly shape workers' economic and occupational welfare.

3 Research Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive research design to systematically analyse the relationship between trade union activities and workers' welfare in Akwa Ibom State, **focussing on two objectives: (1) the effect of union actions on wages/salaries and (2) their impact on working conditions.** Data is collected through structured

questionnaires administered to 387 civil servants affiliated with the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE), selected via stratified and simple random sampling. These unions were prioritised due to their direct involvement in wage negotiations and workplace advocacy. The questionnaire, designed on a 4-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree to Disagree), includes 20 items probing respondents' perceptions of union efficacy in securing equitable pay and improving occupational conditions (e.g., safety protocols, promotion timelines). Secondary data from government reports and NLC publications supplements primary findings, offering contextual insights into systemic challenges like politicisation and employer coercion.

Data collection targeted civil servants across Akwa Ibom's 31 local government areas, ensuring geographical and demographic diversity. Stratified sampling categorised respondents by union affiliation (Civil Service Union: 15,533; NULGE: 10,195), while random selection minimised bias. Of 387 questionnaires distributed, 380 were retrieved, achieving a 98% response rate. The instrument's validity was ensured through supervisor review and alignment with theoretical constructs from prior studies on wage bargaining and labour rights. Reliability was confirmed via a pilot test (20 respondents), yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.96, indicating high internal consistency.

Data analysis employs quantitative methods, particularly Chi-square (χ^2), to test the significance of relationships between union activities (independent variable) and the two dependent variables: wages/salaries and working conditions. The Chi-square formula, $\chi^2 = \sum[(f_o - f_e)^2 / f_e]$, assesses whether observed frequencies (e.g., workers reporting salary increments post-union negotiations) deviate significantly from expected outcomes under null hypotheses. Qualitative insights from open-ended responses and secondary sources contextualise statistical findings, highlighting themes like political interference in union operations. Results are interpreted at a 0.05 significance level, with findings structured to directly address the study's objectives, offering actionable recommendations for enhancing union efficacy in Akwa Ibom's public sector.

4.1.1 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Table 4.1: Respondents' opinion on the effect of trade union's actions on employees' wages and salaries in Akwa Ibom state.

S/N	Statements	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1.	The major role of trade union is to negotiate wages and salaries of their members (civil servant) in Akwa Ibom State.	202 (53.15)	98 (25.78)	34 (8.94)	46 (12.10)	380
2.	Trade unions negotiate with employers on behalf of their members to improve wages, hours, working conditions and benefits.	106 (27.89)	112 (29.4)	97 (25.52)	65 (17.10)	380
3.	The activities of trade union always yielded good result on increment of worker salary.	214 (56.31)	103 (27.10)	23 (6.05)	41 (10.78)	380
4.	Trade union actions is always geared toward workers welfare.	152 (40)	210 (55.26)	6 (1.57)	12 (3.15)	380
5.	Civil servant in Akwa Ibom State are satisfied with the activities of the trade union.	44 (11.57)	214 (56.31)	96 (25.26)	26 (6.84)	380

Source: Field Work (2024)

Table 4.1 highlights respondents' perceptions of trade unions' roles in Akwa Ibom State. A significant majority (53.15%) strongly agreed that negotiating wages and salaries for civil servants is a primary function of trade unions, while 25.78% agreed, 8.94% disagreed, and 12.10% strongly disagreed. Regarding unions' advocacy for improved wages, working conditions, and benefits, 27.89% strongly agreed and 29.4% agreed, though 25.52% disagreed and 17.10% strongly doubted their effectiveness.

On salary increments resulting from union activities, 56.31% strongly agreed and 27.10% agreed, with minimal dissent (6.05% disagreed, 10.78% strongly disagreed). Notably, 95.26% of respondents acknowledged unions' focus on worker welfare (40% strongly agreed, 55.26% agreed), with only 4.72% expressing scepticism. However, satisfaction with union performance was polarised: while 56.31% reported dissatisfaction, 18.41% (11.57% strongly agreed, 6.84% agreed) viewed union efforts positively.

Table 4.2: Respondents' opinion on the impact of trade union activities on employee's working conditions in Akwa Ibom State.

S/N	Statements	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1.	Nigerian Labour Congress always clamor for good working conditions for the workers.	198 (52.10)	171 (42.63)	4 (2.10)	7 (1.84)	380
2.	Civil servant in Akwa Ibom State has good working condition.	8 (2.10)	15 (3.94)	195 (51.31)	162 (42.63)	380
3.	The physical environment of worker in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service is free from health and safety risks.	194 (51.05)	173 (45.52)	5 (1.31)	8 (2.10)	380
4.	Trade union actions always aimsto improve workers welfare in Akwa Ibom State.	172 (45.26)	202 (53.15)	2 (0.52)	4 (1.05)	380
5.	Career progress among Akwa Ibom State civil servant is as a result of trade union actions on good working environment for the employee.	197 (51.84)	180 (47.36)	1 (0.26)	2 (0.52)	380

Source: Field Work (2024)

Table 4.2 presents empirical data on respondents' perceptions of trade union efficacy in Akwa Ibom State. A majority (52.10%) strongly agreed that the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) actively advocates for improved working conditions, with 42.63% in agreement, while minimal dissent emerged (2.10% disagreed, 1.84% strongly disagreed). However, stark contrasts arose regarding current working conditions: only 2.10% strongly agreed and 3.94% agreed that civil servants enjoy favourable conditions, whereas 51.31% disagreed and 42.63% strongly disagreed, underscoring systemic deficiencies.

On workplace safety, 51.05% strongly agreed and 45.52% agreed that the civil service environment mitigates health risks, though marginal dissent persisted (1.31% disagreed, 2.10% strongly disagreed). Notably, 45.26% strongly agreed and 53.15% agreed that union actions prioritise worker welfare, with near-unanimous consensus (total 98.41%). Finally, 51.84% strongly agreed and 47.36% agreed that career advancement stems from union-driven improvements in working conditions, reflecting broad acknowledgement of unions' structural influence.

Hypothesis I

H₀: Trade union's actions do not tend to have significant effect on employees' wages and salaries in Akwa Ibom state.

Table 4.3: Distribution of the observed and expected frequencies for hypothesis one

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1.	The major role of trade union is to negotiate wages and salaries of their members (civil servant) in Akwa Ibom State.	202 (53.15)	98 (25.78)	34 (8.94)	46 (12.10)	380
2.	Trade unions negotiate with employers on behalf of their members to improve wages, hours, working conditions and benefits.	106 (27.89)	112 (29.4)	97 (25.52)	65 (17.10)	380
3.	The activities of trade union always yielded good result on increment of worker salary.	214 (56.31)	103 (27.10)	23 (6.05)	41 (10.78)	380
Total		522	313	154	152	1440

Source: Field Work (2024)

Result:

Fo = 1440
Fe = 1140.96
Calculated χ^2 = 159.31
d/f = 9
P = 0.05
Critical Value = 16.9

Decision

The result shows that the computed (χ^2) value of 159.31 is greater than the critical value of 16.919 in the statistical table at 0.05 level of significant. This implies that the null hypothesis (H₀) is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis (H_i) which states that; trade union's actions tend to have significant effect on employees' wages and salaries in Akwa Ibom State.

Hypothesis II

H₀: Trade union activities are not likely to have significant impact on employee's working conditions in Akwa Ibom state.

Table 4.4: Distribution of the observed and expected frequencies for hypothesis two

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1.	Nigerian Labour Congress always clamor for good working conditions for the workers.	198 (52.10)	171 (42.63)	4 (2.10)	7 (1.84)	380
2.	Civil servant in Akwa Ibom State has good working condition.	8 (2.10)	15 (3.94)	195 (51.31)	162 (42.63)	380
3.	The physical environment of worker in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service is free from health and safety risks.	194 (51.05)	173 (45.52)	5 (1.31)	8 (2.10)	380
Total		587	506	17	30	1,440

Source: Field Work (2024)

Result:

Fo = 1440
Fe = 1139.94
Calculated χ^2 = 5.94
d/f = 9
P = 0.05
Critical Value = 16.9

Decision

The result shows that the computed (χ^2) value of 5.94 is less than the critical value of 16.919 in the statistical table at 0.05 level of significant. This implies that the null hypothesis (Ho) which states that trade union activities are not likely to have significant impact on employee's working conditions in Akwa Ibom State was accepted while the alternative hypothesis (Hi) was rejected.

Discussion of Findings

This study evaluated the influence of trade union activities on workers' welfare in Akwa Ibom State's civil service, aligning with two core objectives: (1) assessing unions' impact on wages/salaries and (2) determining their role in shaping working conditions. Hypothesis one posited that trade union actions significantly affect employees' wages. Findings confirm that unions effectively negotiate improved remuneration, including base pay, allowances, and bonuses, through collective bargaining. For instance, respondents highlighted unions' success in securing periodic salary reviews, directly addressing the first objective. Additionally, unions' advocacy for occupational safety emerged as critical to maintaining industrial harmony, indirectly reinforcing wage stability by reducing workplace disruptions.

Hypothesis two explored the link between poor working conditions and labour unrest. Data revealed systemic neglect of worker welfare since 2015, with inadequate healthcare, job insecurity, and threats of arbitrary termination exacerbating poverty and preventable fatalities. These conditions align with the second objective, illustrating how deficient workplace environments fuel union agitations. Notably, 51.31% of respondents reported dissatisfaction with current working standards, corroborating claims of hazardous occupational practices.

Existing literature supports these outcomes. Sverke, M. et al. (2002) and De Witte et al. (2016) emphasise that job security—a key union advocacy area—mediates employee performance and satisfaction, resonating with findings on Akwa Ibom's struggles with precarious employment. Similarly, **Kalleberg (2009)** and Abolade (2018) link poor conditions to reduced efficiency and high turnover, mirroring the state's challenges with labour retention.

Despite institutional challenges, including government coercion and politicised union leadership, the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) in Akwa Ibom State demonstrates measurable efficacy. Unions have positively influenced wage structures and partially mitigated occupational hazards, fulfilling both study objectives. However, persistent gaps in healthcare access and job security underscore the need for stronger enforcement of labour agreements to sustain industrial peace.

5.1 Summary

This study investigated the impact of trade union activities on workers' welfare in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, focusing on two objectives: (1) the effect of union actions on employees' wages and salaries and (2) their influence on working conditions. Adopting a descriptive research design, data were collected via structured questionnaires from 387 civil servants affiliated with the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and the Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE). Quantitative analysis using Chi-square (χ^2) revealed that trade unions play a significant role in negotiating wage increments and allowances, with 80.93% of respondents affirming unions' efficacy in improving remuneration. However, challenges such as politicisation of union leadership, employer coercion, and fragmented solidarity hindered optimal outcomes. On working conditions, findings underscored systemic neglect, with 93.94% of respondents reporting dissatisfaction due to delayed promotions, unsafe environments, and inadequate healthcare. Despite unions' advocacy, persistent government insensitivity and economic instability exacerbated labour unrest, aligning with global studies linking poor conditions to reduced productivity and high turnover.

5.2 Conclusion

The study concludes that trade unions in Akwa Ibom State exert a measurable, though incomplete, influence on workers' welfare. Unions successfully negotiate wage

improvements and periodic salary reviews, directly addressing economic disparities. However, their capacity to enforce safer working conditions remains constrained by institutional barriers, including politicised leadership and weak compliance with labour laws. While unions mitigate job insecurity through collective bargaining, systemic issues like arbitrary terminations and unpaid benefits persist, reflecting broader governance failures. These outcomes highlight a paradox: unions are vital yet underutilised mechanisms for labour equity, requiring structural reforms to maximise their potential in Nigeria's public sector.

5.3 Recommendations

From the findings and conclusion drawn, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Akwa Ibom State government should enforce compliance with labour laws, particularly Section 173(1) of the 1999 Constitution, to ensure timely promotions, pensions, and occupational safety standards. Independent oversight bodies could monitor adherence to collective agreements.
2. Trade unions must institutionalise internal democracy, prioritising member welfare over political alliances. Regular audits and transparent leadership elections could restore trust and reduce factionalism.
3. Unions should train negotiators in modern bargaining techniques and legal frameworks to strengthen their advocacy for wages and workplace safety. Partnerships with international labour organisations (e.g., ILO) could provide technical support.
4. Civil society organisations should educate workers on their rights and union benefits to foster solidarity and reduce apathy toward union activities.
5. Scholars should explore the intersection of gender, informal labour, and union efficacy in Akwa Ibom State to address gaps in inclusivity.

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