

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF STRIKES IN THE CIVILIAN AND MILITARY REGIMES IN NIGERIA; A STUDY OF ANAMBRA STATE CIVIL SERVICE BETWEEN 1979 AND 1989

BY

JOSHUA O. NWEKE

Email: joshuaonweke@yahoo.com, joshuanweke123@gmail.com

Department of Sociology/Anthropology,

Faculty of Social Sciences,

Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki

Abstract

Between 1979 and 1989, Nigeria witnessed two types of political regimes; civilian and military. Each of these regimes experienced several strike actions which have adverse socio-economic consequences on the nation. Previous studies paid attention on the causes and consequences of strikes and did not take cognizance of the ways in which different political regimes (civilian and military) that ruled the country handled industrial conflicts. This study therefore, draws a comparative analysis of industrial strikes recorded in the Nigerian civil service in the two types of political regimes. As an ex-post factor research, 250 respondents received both structured and unstructured questionnaire which focused on demographic characteristics of respondents and methods adopted by the two regimes in handling strikes. The study carefully utilized documents that deal on strike. This helped to underscore the origin of trade unionism, its objectives and governments intervention on labour matters. Results indicate that civilian regime adopted negotiation with labour leaders (58%) and use of threat on labour union leaders (10%) as methods used in handling strikes while the military regime used force and the proscription of trade unions (41%) and negotiation with labour leaders (25%) as methods used in dealing with industrial strikes. The study recommends the use of collective bargaining as a tool for industrial peace and harmony especially in the Nigerian civil service.

Key words: Collective bargaining, Civilian, Military, Proscription, Strike

Introduction

1.1: Background and Statement of the Problem

Nigeria as a nation is blessed with abundant human and material resources. Utilization of these resources could have placed the country as one of the most developed nations in the world and the African continent in particular but reverse is the case. It may be useful to argue that the country's inability to utilize these resources has been responsible for her unstable social, educational and economic systems (Nweke 2015).

In Nigeria, her citizens should have gained satisfaction in all aspects of life instead they experience crisis in all sectors of her economic life. The worst hit is in the work sector where there has not been any appreciable growth in the quality of life of her work force. For instance, the conditions of service of her workers are pitiable compared to that of other countries even within Africa such as Ghana, Zimbabwe, Egypt, South Africa and so forth.

In the Nigerian labour relations, labour unrest or what is today called "militant unionism" has for long been its prominent feature. It was even so during the colonial days (Ananaba 1969, Onyeonoru 2006). For instance, history reveals that between 1916 and 1919, the civil service union which was formed in 1912 was involved in an agitation for a "war bonus". This agitation led to a "war bonus" calculated at the rate of thirty per cent (30%) which was added and paid to African Staff with their salaries (Ananaba 1969). In 1945, there was a general strike which lasted around fifty-two days involving the work force of over forty-two thousand. This was staged in Nigeria when the government failed to consider the request of workers for better conditions of service. That industrial dispute was to become a reference point for other similar actions not long after.

In November 18th, 1949 there was the shooting to death of 21 coal miners at Iva Valley Enugu, over an agitation for improved conditions of service. In January 1959, the Airways Workers Union organized a strike in furtherance of a wage claim and improved conditions of employment. In December 10th the same year, the Railway Workers' Union organized a demonstration against bad faith, maladministration and corruption. (Ananaba 1969).

Shortly after Nigeria got her independence, the country witnessed a general strike in June 1st 1961. This strike started in Lagos as a result of government's failure to honour the request of workers for wage increase made in the Zudonu Committee's Report. This committee was set up in January 1961 by the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (T.U.C.) to carry out an investigation on the structure, remuneration and other conditions of service in wage - earning employment in Nigeria, and to make recommendations to the Central Executive Council (Ananaba 1969).

In 1963 another general strike was witnessed. The bone of contention was the worker's clamour for improved conditions of service. This led the federal government to set up a commission of inquiry known as the Morgan Commission. When the workers saw later that the federal government was not willing to implement the commission's report, they embarked on another strike in May 31st 1964.

In January 1975 after the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), the civil servants embarked on industrial action to compel the government to give them more money because they claimed that their new pay scales were inadequate. In 1993 there was a labour conflict which came in the wake of the annulment of June 12, presidential election by the then head of State, General Ibrahim B. Babangida. This strike continued into much of the decade and had prominently involved the National Union of Petroleum, Energy, and Natural Gas Workers Union (NUPENG), the Nigerian Labour Congress (N.L.C.), the Nigerian Union of Teachers (N.U.T.) the Academic Staff Union of Universities (A.S.U.U.) among others. Also, in the year 2000, between June 8th and 13th, the Nigerian Labour Congress embarked on a nationwide industrial strike over the federal government's move to deregulate petroleum products. The year 2009 witnessed a general strike embarked upon by the Academic Staff Union of Universities

(A.S.U.U.) over non implementation of agreement reached with the federal government of Nigeria. In January 2012, labour unions in Nigeria embarked on a general strike over federal government's removal of fuel subsidy and deregulation of the petroleum sector. History reveals that hardly does any year go without one industrial strike or the other. It either involves a trade union or the entire trade unions. Strike therefore is a prominent feature in the Nigerian labour history.

Attempts have been made by the federal government to manage the situation over the years through setting up wage review commissions and panels but these have not been successful. Among the wage review commissions are:

1. The Morgan Commission of Inquiry set up in 1963,
2. The Adebo Commission of Inquiry set up in 1971,
3. The Udoji Commission of Inquiry set up in 1974 and,
4. Allison Ayida Commission set up in 1997.

Problems in the area of labour relations in the country are numerous and need to be addressed. There is therefore need to evaluate the labour relations issues in the nation Nigeria and why the country has been so prone to instability and conflicts in the labour sector. Are these problems blamable on the military regimes that ruled the country or are the civilian regimes responsible? This work provides an answer.

Scholars' attentions have been focused on strike generally and their associated consequences with no attention paid in comparing strikes that occurred in the two types of political regimes in Nigeria: civilian and the military. Thus, the methods employed by a type of political regime are relevance in understanding its nature and its prevalence. This study underscores strikes in Nigeria especially in Anambra state civil service between 1979 and 1989.

1.2: Research Questions

1. What are the methods adopted by both civilian and military regimes in handling strikes in Nigeria?
2. What type of political regime recorded the highest number of strikes in Nigeria?

1.3: Objective of the Study

This study unveils the various methods adopted by civilian and military regimes in handling strikes in Nigeria between 1979 and 1989.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1: Trade Union Formation in Nigeria

On the origin of trade unionism in Africa, Damachi (1989) states that there is a controversy surrounding the exact date of trade union in Africa. According to him, Jack Wodis, a labour expert, insists that trade unionism in Africa came through the goodwill of the British or French Government which was anxious to organize the work force in order to bolster its respective economic gains.

Some African writers disagree with the theory of imported trade unionism in Africa. They argue from the wealth of available evidence that trade unionism started in Africa long before the Europeans organized themselves in the African Colonies. According to Damachi (1989),

records show that as far as 1793, long before the formation of the European colonies, strikes had already occurred. This explains the fact that Africans had organized labour force prior to the partition and colonization of Africa. This argument tacitly confirms that the origin of trade unions in Africa is still controversial. Onyeonoru (2006) affirms that in view of the controversy surrounding the origin of trade unionism in Nigeria, three schools of thoughts emerged. They are: the European presence thesis, Colonialism thesis and guild / craft thesis. The European presence thesis traces the origin to the Nigerian contact with the Europeans. In this light, it is argued that Europeans brought the idea into Nigeria. The colonialism thesis suggests that it was the colonial governments that brought trade unionism into Africa and Nigeria to be specific. On the contrary, the guild thesis debunked both European presence thesis and colonialism thesis on the ground that trade unionism had been in existence in Africa before Africans had contact with Europeans and colonial masters. This stems from the fact that Africans had organized labour like group of artisans (black-smiths), hunters and so forth.

In his own contribution, Ananaba (1969) affirms that trade unions emerged in Nigeria from the efforts of workers to seek an improvement of existing conditions of service through collective action. This is corroborated by Onyeonoru (2006). Yusufu (1984) further argues that trade unions were formed not only for the improvement of workers conditions of service but also to match the existence of such institutions elsewhere. According to him, the idea of forming the first trade union in Nigeria was not introduced by a Nigerian. He states that it was a Sierra-Leonian named Henry Libert who was on transfer from Freetown to Nigeria that introduced the idea of its formation to match with what was obtainable in Sierra-Leon.

2.2: Objectives of Trade Unions

In Nigeria, extract from part one of the United Labour Congress of Nigeria published in May 1962 titled "A Programme for the Future" confirms that a lot of social objectives accompany trade union formation in Nigeria. The paper lists these objectives as follows;

1. Fair wages for every worker,
2. Good working condition for every worker,
3. Equal pay and good condition for work of equal value,
4. The right of every worker to choose his own political party,
5. Full employment,
6. Universal free education,
7. Better housing for all,
8. New and modern industry for Nigeria,
9. Modernization of Agriculture and
10. Trade Union freedom.

2.3: Legitimacy of trade unions in Nigeria

Uvieghara (1976) wrote on the legitimacy of trade unionism in Nigeria. He stresses the extent of freedom granted workers on the formation of trade unions. He argues that trade union membership is voluntary except employees of some government establishments who are not allowed to join or form trade unions. These establishments are as follows;

1. The Nigeria Army, Navy or Air force,
2. The Nigeria Police force,
3. The Prison department of Nigeria.
4. The Customs,

5. The Nigeria Security, Printing and Minting Company Ltd.
6. The Central Bank of Nigeria,
7. The Nigerian External Tele-communication Ltd., and
8. Every Federal or State Government establishment, the employee of which are authorized to bear arm such as the State Security Service, The Civil Defense Corp and so forth.

It is pertinent here to submit that the review on the origin of trade unionism in Africa and Nigeria in particular helps us to have a link with the formation of the Nigerian civil service union which is the focus of this research. Damachi *et al* (1979) in their own view argue that trade unionism and labour relations originated in the Nigerian civil service in 1912. The date of the formation of the first trade union, i.e., the Southern Nigerian Civil Service Union was inaugurated in August 19, 1912.

2.4: Government Intervention on Labour Matters

Various reasons are given by scholars on why government intervenes in labour matters. Obiyan (1975) argues that government intervention in industrial relations is aimed at preventing labour exploitation and ensuring a reasonable standard of working conditions, maintaining industrial peace and encouraging both sides of their mutual benefit and in the national interest. In his own conception, Armstrong (1969) in the same light identifies three notable actors which interplay in industrial relations system. These actors are labour, management (employer) and the state (government). Accordingly, these actors jointly create the web of rules which govern the work place and work community. Out of these actors, the state usually has decisive roles which make it easily over-ride the others. It becomes the dominant actor especially in developing countries like Nigeria.

To buttress this further, Fashoyin (1980) argues that in determining the interest of the state in controlling the character of industrial relations, the Nigerian government in 1968 promulgated the Trade Disputes (Emergency Provisions) Decree No. 21 which was amended in 1969 through Trade Dispute (Emergency Provisions Amendment) Decree No. 53. Under these, the government banned strikes and lock-outs and made arbitration compulsory. He further states that later in 1975, the government announced a new national labour policy in which among other things, stressed its right to even intervene in both union management affairs and labour management relations.

Accordingly, Yesufu (1984) is of the view that state intervention in industrial relations refers to all the action, direct or indirect, by means of which a government promotes, sustains or participates to influence or determine the conditions of employment contract-employer, managers on the one hand, and employees or trade unions on the other. Fashoyin (1986) declares that there are whelming evidences of substantial state intervention and control in the actual practice of labour and management relations both during the colonial period and even after independence. This becomes the reference point of Obasi (1991) when he observes that while the government accepted the principle of collective bargaining, its wage fixing procedure did not in practice obey this. Hence, wage determination process in the public sector was largely characterized by unilateralism.

2.5: Theoretical Framework

2.5.1: Democratic and political theory of trade unions

The democratic and political theory recognizes the role of power in human relationship. It recognizes that the balance of forces within individual enterprises could largely be determined by the political decision at the level of the larger society. The perspective therefore maintains that trade union has a role to play in extending workers' rights to have a say in decisions which affect them both in the micro and macro societies. For instance, the political role which accords 'dignity' to the worker is more important than the economic gains of pure trade unionism.

Chamberlain (1951) for example identifies two main 'political activities of trade unions as industrial government and industrial management. 'In industrial government' collective bargaining is viewed as a constitution-making institution which makes rules governing the workers and employers/government as it affect industrial relations in order to prevent one party being taken by surprise. 'Industrial management' on the other hand refers to a process where trade union representatives participate in the management function of the enterprise in the areas of mutual, rather than competing interests.

Allan Flanders cited in Poole (1981) equally argues that the basic social purpose of trade unions is 'job regulation' not only within the confines of the industry but also at the national level in order to influence overall levels of employment, economic planning, and so forth. The role of 'job regulation' was not to be an end itself but 'as a means for the free development of the individual worker during the course of working life per se'.

However, the political role assigned to labour by the 'democratic' perspective does not give room for the aspirations of the workers to seize political power and re-organise the whole society on a new basis. The political role expected of labour by this perspective is to be within the framework of existing production relations and power structure. Here, trade unions act as pressure group to press home their demands at both industrial relations and macro politics.

In Nigeria, the predominant mode of involvement of labour in politics by the mainstream of the movement has been restricted to this perspective. Thus, labour has opposed authoritarian tendencies and violation of fundamental human rights; defended national sovereignty, and democratic rights. This is the picture of the Nigerian civil service in their industrial relations activities. For instance, in January 2012, the Nigerian Labour Congress embarked on general strike against federal government's policy to remove fuel subsidy and deregulate the petroleum sector.

In playing the role of pressure group, trade union helps to enforce the application of the rule of law in governance. By doing this it fosters the protection of fundamental human rights and ensures that those in governance rule with human face. Therefore, unless the working class and the poor are politically empowered, sustaining the welfare of ordinary people, in terms of basic needs cannot be guaranteed, hence, this theory.

Methodology

3.1: Study Design

The type of design adopted in this study is the ex-post facto design. This became necessary since the event under study had taken place before the investigation. This makes it difficult for the

researcher to manipulate the variables of interest in this study. Significantly, questionnaire was used to elicit information from respondents. Information was also sourced through documents dealing with strikes.

3.2: Study Population

This study population is made up of the total work force population of the state civil service as at 1988. The civil service workforce population as at the period under survey was fifty thousand and twelve (50,012) workers.

3.3: Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The sample size is determined from the total population of civil servant under study using sample fraction method calculated at 1/200 of the total population, i.e. S. F. - $1/200 \times 50012/1 = 250$ approximately. This is approximately .50% of the total population.

The sample size (250) for questionnaire distribution was selected using the simple random sampling method. This made all the civil servants within the period under study to have the probability of being selected.

Table3.3.1: Selected samples for the study

S/n o	Names of ministries, departments or commissions	Total workforce	Chosen sample
1.	Ministry of Agriculture	3502	18
2.	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning	3120	16
3.	Ministry of Health	6716	33
4.	Ministry of Commerce and Industry	1170	06
5.	Ministry of Education	938	05
6.	Ministry of Justice	350	02
7.	Ministry of Local Govt. and Chieftaincy matters	930	05
8.	Ministry of Information, Social Development, Youths Sports and Culture.	687	03
9.	Ministry of Works and Transport	3997	20
10.	Government House	517	03
11.	Cabinet Office	1644	08
12.	Audit Department	386	02
13.	Judiciary	2342	12
14.	Civil Service Commission	128	-
15.	Local Government Service Commission	174	-
16.	Judiciary Service Commission	034	-
17.	State Education Commission	23377	117
	Total	50,012	250

Sources: Statistics unit of the Enugu State Civil Service Commission

3.4: Methods of Data Collection

Data relevant to this work were gotten through two major sources: primary and secondary. The primary data were sourced through the use of the while the secondary data were sourced through in-depth analysis of documents dealing on strikes. These documents were sourced from the library, statistical departments of the Federal Ministry of Employment, Labour and Productivity Enugu, statistical departments of the State ministries, commissions, non ministerial departments and some trade union offices.

3.5: Data Analysis and Processing

Data collected for this study have been carefully analysed scientifically. Qualitative data were given content analysis while quantitative data were statistically analysed through frequency distribution tables. The chi-square (X^2) statistics was used to test the research hypothesis.

Results and Discussions

The result of this study is handled in two sections: 'A' and 'B'. Section 'A' deals with background information of respondents while section 'B' handles thematic issues.

4.1: Section A: Background Information of Respondents

In this study, the questionnaire was distributed to two hundred and fifty (250) respondents. These were people who were certified to have been in the civil service in the study area between 1979 and 1989.

When the questionnaires were distributed to the two hundred and fifty respondents, only one hundred and eighty (180) returned theirs while seventy (70) did not. Out of this (180), eighteen (18) were invalid. This is because the years of their first employment fell beyond the research period 1979 and 1989. This analysis is based on a sample size of one hundred and sixty-two (162) respondents. This sample has a representative of both sexes, 78.4% respondents were males while 21.6% were females. It was observed that the respondents belonged to different age range and different marital status. The table 4.1.1 indicates respondents' information on their age and sex distribution.

Table 4.1.1: Age and sex distribution of respondents

Year	Male	Female	Total	Per cent age_
30-34	21	3	24	15%
35-39	33	14	47	29%
40-44	32	4	36	22%
45-49	4	7	11	07%
50-54	16	—	16	10%
55-59	8	6	14	09%
60-64	9	1	10	06%
65-69	4		04	02%
Total	127	35	162	100%
Percentage	78.4	21.6	100	100%

Field survey 2013

In the table 4.1.1, data shows that 29% respondents fall within the ages of thirty-five and thirty-nine. This is closely followed by 22% respondents. They fall within the ages of forty and forty-nine. The least represented are respondents between the ages of sixty-five and sixty-nine which have 2% representation. Result also indicates that 78.4% respondents were males while 21.6% were females. Very importantly, information was generated on respondents' marital status. Table 4.1.2 portrays the data.

Table 4.1.2: Respondents marital status

S/No.	Marital status	Number of respondents	Per cent age
1	Married	91	56%
2	Single	40	25%
3	Widow	31	19%
4	Divorced	-	-
	Total	162	100%

Field survey 2013

Information in table 4.1.2 shows that 56% respondents were married. This is followed by 25% respondents who were single. The least among them were the widows that were 19%. Record shows that divorce was not experienced by the respondents.

4.2: Section B: Methods Adopted by Civilian and Military Regimes in Handling Strikes in Nigeria between from 1979 and 1989

The two political regimes in Nigeria (Civilian and Military) adopted varied measures in handling strikes that occurred within the period 1979 and 1989. Statistical evidence from the 13 number of strikes in the research period indicates that both regimes did not use suppression or unilateral award in settling strike issues rather they allowed third party intervention in the matter. The parties that intervened on strikes within the period were the Federal Ministry of Labour, Employment and Productivity, the Anambra State Government and the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. For instance, the State Government intervened in the 9th of March 1981 when Joint Action Committee of Trade Unions went on strike over the failure of the Anambra State Civil Service Commission to release workers promotions and its refusal to withdraw an obnoxious circular No. 1 of 1981. Also, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria intervened in the strike embarked upon by the Association of Resident Doctors of Nigeria in 3rd of November, 1981 over the failure by the Federal Ministry of Health to implement agreements reached between it and the Doctors for improved service conditions. These intervention resulted in the stoppage (or calling off) of the strikes and settlement measures were designed.

Respondents were interviewed on the measures adopted by the two types of political regimes in handling strikes within the research period. In this light, responses were generated from respondents on measures adopted by the civilian (Shagari's) regime in handling strike cases. Table 4.2.1 portrays data generated.

Table 4.2.1: Measures adopted by the civilian regime in handling strikes

S/No.	Views of respondents	Number of respondents	Per cent age
A	Neutral/ had no Knowledge of the measure used	40	25%
B	No measure was used	11	07%
C	The regime negotiated with labour leaders	94	58%
D	The regime used threat on union leaders.	17	10%
	TOTAL	162	100%

Field survey 2013

In table 4.2.1, data indicates that civilian regime is credited with different approaches in handling strikes. Some respondents said that the civilian government embraced negotiation. Others believed that the government used threat in handling the situation. Evidently, available data shows that 94 respondents which are 58 per cent of the total population were of the opinion that civilian regime adopted negotiation in addressing labour matters. By this, it means that labour matters were often negotiated between the government and the labour union leaders. It implies that problems relating to labour were solved through dialogue.

Some respondents were of the view that civilian regime used threat to handle labour conflicts. This is the view of seventeen (17) respondents. Evidently, this measure was adopted by the regime to enable them exercise full control over organized labour. Few respondents had no knowledge on the measure they adopted while some were neutral. On the other hand, data gathered from respondents on how the military regime handled labour issues are presented in table 4.2.2.

Table 4.2.2: Approaches adopted by military regime in handling industrial strikes

S/No	Views of respondents	No. of respondents	Per cent
A	Neutral / had no knowledge of any measure Adopted	55	34%
B	No measure was used	00	00%
C	Military regime negotiated with labour Leaders	41	25%
D	Military regime used force and proscription of trade unions in handling labour matters.	66	41%
	TOTAL	162	100%

Field survey 2013

Reactions of respondents in table 4.2.2 are varied. Majority of them revealed that military regime used force in handling labour matters. Data reveals that 66 respondents which are 41 percent of the total sample population were of this view, while 41 respondents representing 25 per cent argued that

they used negotiation in handling labour related matters.

Making a comparative analysis of strikes in the two political regimes, results indicate that strikes were credited higher during the civilian regime than in the military. The civilian government witnessed higher rate of strikes because it is a free and democratic type of government. It is a type of political regime where individuals have the right to express their feelings on any issue whether labour or non labour related matters. The constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria grants citizens freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of association, right to exercise one's franchise and a lot of other benefits. The freedom of individual citizens in these respects made the civilian government to embrace negotiation more in its settlement of labour disputes.

Unlike the civilian, the military is an undemocratic regime. It is the type that is associated with the use of force and pressure in tackling issues whether labour related or not. Results show that the military used force in handling labour conflicts. From all indications, it is clear that the forceful measures applied by the military was responsible in reducing the number of strikes during its period, while the negotiation approach adopted by the civilian regime precipitated an increase in the number of strikes within its regime.

The various trade unions that were involved in the 13 number of strikes in the study area within the period can be examined. The record indicates that 6 trade unions were involved. They include the Nigerian Union of Teachers (N.U.T.), Civil Service Technical Workers Union (C.S.T.W.U), Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees (N.U.L.G.E.), Joint Action Committee of Trade Unions (JACTUS), Association of Resident Doctors of Nigeria and Printing and Publishing Workers Union of Nigeria.

Among these unions, two unions were much involved in strike actions more than others. They are the N.U.T. and N.U.L.G.E. Both of them embarked on strikes 4 times each. In view of this, it is on record that strikes were witnessed more in the local government system than in other sectors. By implication, trade unions within the local government system were involved in strike more than trade unions in other sectors of the nation's economy.

Conclusion

This study reveals that 13 numbers of strikes were witnessed within the period under study (1979 and 1989). Out of this, greater per cent age of the strikes took place during the military regime while few of them took place during civilian regime. Governments within the period employed several measures in order to restrain the growth of labour cost and encourage the increases in productivity. This was more prominent in the military type of political regime. In a democratic regime, legal rules were devised in order to encourage the growth of collective bargaining and regulate the use of strike weapon which is the basic tool for employees.

This study further reveals that government labour legislation is often seen to lead to industrial conflict. This means that alternative could be that government should learn to invoke labour legislation with caution, fairness and impartiality. The arbitrary promulgation of decrees, retrenching of workers and banning labour unions were seen not to have in any way contributed to healthy industrial relations in Anambra State and Nigeria in general. Intimidation of workers through legislation has not only caused inestimable damages in their motivation to work but also depreciated productivity.

Recommendations

From the results of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Strict observance of collective bargaining in trade dispute resolution should be adhered to by the government or employers of labour. This is because for an industrial peace, harmony and growth to be witnessed, collective bargaining is undoubtedly superior to any other machinery of settling labour disputes. Though this is factual, it will be wrong also to admit that collective bargaining will eliminate completely the issue of labour unrest in formal organizations especially in the Nigerian civil service.
2. The study also suggests that government should from time to time review the wages of its employees in line with the inflationary rate in the country. This may be a panacea to the problem of strike in formal organizations, Anambra State civil service to be specific and Nigeria industrial workforce in general.

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