



New Minimum Wage Agitations and Collective Bargaining Nigeria: The State of the Debate

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Abstract: *This study investigated workers' agitation for an increase in the national minimum wage in Nigeria. To this end, it compared workers pay across the globe and using Enugu state bench mark to generalize for the need for an increment. This is no matter the faction of the divided labour union, both agreed for an increase but differ on the amount. Government on the other hand constituted a committee to start negotiation with the labour union. The data for this study were generated through documentary sources, Focus Group Discussion and in-depth interview with labour sector participants. Tables and the technique of content analysis constituted our data analysis technique. It was discovered that rather than decrease, industrial conflicts were on the increase in the epoch of recession. The whole ambit of the demand for a new wage policy and the contention that they have raised have provided the basis of the study.*

Keywords: *Labour Law & Policy, Minimum Wage, Labour Laws, Minimum Wage Bench Mark, Poor Remuneration & Welfare Services & Nigerian Economy*

INTRODUCTION

Harmonized relationships constitute a significant factor in effective organizational performance. The major players in public personnel management are the employees, the management team and the government. Any disharmony between any two or among the three, automatically leaves the organization worse off in terms of productivity. Organizations are established to pursue and achieve certain goals and objectives. Public sector organizations like the civil service function to deliver services and perform tasks that could galvanize socio-economic growth in the form of basic amenities of life and infrastructural facilities to the populace through appropriate policies and programmes. The human resource is a basic element in the realization of public sector objectives.

The means to achieve these objectives is found in the human resource policies, practices and procedures which are clearly spelt out in the Civil Service Rules (CSR). Although, workers come into the organization as individuals, as social beings with various needs, they soon realize that their needs and interests are better aggregated and pursued collectively. It is therefore, this interest aggregation, articulation and collective pursuit that underlie trade unionism and collective bargaining in public sector organizations.

According to Otober (2000:223), the term collective bargaining was coined in 1889 by Beatrice Webb in her work on cooperative movements in England. Beatrice combined with her Husband-Sydney (later Lord Passfield) to expand the frontiers of knowledge in the areas of collective bargaining and labour relations. She construed collective bargaining as a term used “to cover negotiations between workers as a group and employers...” The avalanche of literature (foreign and local: Budd, 2008; Otober, 2000; Fajana, 2000; Fashoyin, 1999) in this field suggests that industrial relations covering trade unionism, collective bargaining, trade dispute/conflict, grievance/grievance procedure and conflict resolution to mention but a few has really come of age.

The origin of collective bargaining in Nigeria is traceable to the public sector, and as Fashoyin (1999:104) recorded,

“...this was as a result of the near absence of a private sector at the turn of the (19th) century”. He corroborated that British Bank of West Africa (now know as First Bank of Nigeria) founded in 1894 was not unionized until 1942. Even the Royal Niger Company (now UAC of Nigeria) with vast political and commercial interests in Nigeria was not organized until 1946. Fashoyin noted “...ironically, the machinery has performed relatively poorly...” The emphasis here is that the history of collective bargaining is traceable to the public sector, but the machinery of collective bargaining has performed rather poorly in the sector. Elsewhere, he attributed this relative poor performance of the machinery and practice of collective bargaining to “...the uniqueness of the employer” (Fashoyin, 1999:154).

The employer as mentioned above is government. Experience has shown that in Nigeria, government can be ubiquitous and omnipotent. It is therefore not surprising that the author observed that public sector “as used in Nigeria, is an all-embracing entity covering, as they were, all agencies and institutions or organizations whose principal benefactor is government, whether at the federal, state or local government level (Fashoyin, 1999:154).

According to Ujo (1994:38), the history of workers is the history of their struggle with political authorities and attempt to create a viable union. Workers are needed in every country to produce goods and services. However, once they are employed, they enter into a life-long struggle with their employers. The struggle as Ujo (1994) has identified is usually for improvement in their wages and conditions of service.

In order for the employees to effectively and successfully bargain with their employers, they must in first instance, organize themselves into unions. It is through this process of unionization that the employees become powerful and then can now use their strength to hold the employers to ransom, where needed, by using techniques such as work-to-rule, lockouts, demonstrations, strikes and intimidation. It is not inherently injurious for management in an enterprise or organization to be in conflict with labour union in the organization. On the other hand, it is not impossible too, to have a situation where the management and labour union in an organization are working harmoniously under mutual respect and confidence of each

other. However, such a harmonious state can only be achieved where rule of law, equity, industrial democracy and collective bargaining are allowed to thrive and blossom (Agalamanyi, 2010:207).

Apart from the role of government as an employer of labour, its place as third party of interest with the regulatory functions that plays in the Nigerian industrial relations system, evoke considerable interest. Although, wage employment and by extension trade unionism was reported to have commenced during the colonial administration based on the need for workforce in the service of its bureaucracy and for construction purposes (Girigiri, 2002:4), Agalamanyi (2004:123) building on the works of Fashoyin affirmed that “social institutions such as guilds and craft societies did exist before the coming of the Whiteman”. According to these scholars, “the pattern of their transition, if any, to modern trade unions was not clear, but the guilds and craft societies in traditional African communities performed the same duties as modern trade unions.

Contextualizing Collective Bargaining

Collective bargaining which is mostly concerned with the work relationship between unions representing employees and employers (or their management representatives) is an indispensable ingredient or part of an effective industrial relations system.

It involves the process of union organization of employees, negotiation, administration and interpretation of collective agreements covering issues such as wages, hours of works, separation, work and its allocation between workers or group of workers (Ngu, 1994:123). It also includes procedural agreement and other conditions of employment, engaging in concerted economic action and dispute settlement procedures/conflict management and resolution.

Generally, collective bargaining can be seen as a process and as a method. As a process, it is dynamic (moving in ideas) and can be employed as a conflict resolution technique. As a method, it can be viewed as a technique used by trade union (leaders) and managers of organizations to establish and maintain cordial work relations (Ngu, 1994:124).

Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (2000:539) see collective bargaining as negotiation. The authors define same as “the use of communication skills and bargaining to manage conflict and reach mutually satisfying outcomes”. The authors emphasize the indispensable place or role of communication in effective bargaining. The pivot of their argument is that collective bargaining is a very important communication process. They affirmed that collective bargaining is an integral part of every manager’s job. It must however be clarified that much as it may be true to an extent, that one of the actors in the collective bargaining process is the management or its representative, constructing collective bargaining as being an integral part of every manager’s work in an organization is very misleading and a too narrow view. It amounts to a deliberate refusal to acknowledge line and staff functions in an organization.

In a bold move to underscore the role of communication in collective bargaining, Udom (2002:420-421) averred as follows:

A good understanding between labour leaders and management continues to be the most “wished-for” development. It is still far from realization. The reason is the ever-widening communication gap between management and employees. A better communication based on sharing meaningful information by both parties, is what is lacking in most organizations and the only possible “foot-in-the-door” to a fair labour relations.

The above averment by Udom (2002), apt as it would have been raises further enquiry. What type of communication is desired? The author believes in communication “based on meaningful information by both parties”. This is not very precise. An open and frank communication anchored on the principles of transparency and “need to know” is preferred especially in the public sector where there is undue reliance on code of official secrecy.

Uvieghara (2001:388) opined that “the term ‘collective bargaining’ is applied to those arrangements under which wages and conditions of employment are settled by a bargain, in the form of an agreement made between employers or associations of employers and workers’ organizations”, he expatiated that “the long term interest of government, employers and trade unions alike would seem to rest on the process of consultation and discussion which is the foundation of democracy in industry”. If the objective of Collective bargaining is to “reach agreement by bargain”, why does conflict arise in work relations? Elele (2008) attempted an explanation by alluding to the differences in interest and goals of the union and employers. The puzzle that must be addressed in Uvieghara’s submission is the reference to collective bargaining as the foundation of industrial democracy.

In Nigeria and most parts of Africa, reference to democracy is likely to evoke conflict between unions and the employer. How will an employer go through the hurdles of investment and subordinate himself and the organization to a “government by all and for all”? when in his thinking, labour (human resource) is an integral part of the cost he invested in. Industrial democracy is seen as utopia, and this thinking is at the root of conflicts in work relations.

Robbins (2002:396) like Stoner et al (2000) also equated collective bargaining with negotiation, and in this regard defined same as “a process in which two or more parties exchange goods or services and attempt to agree upon the exchange rate for them”. Although, the author went further to identify the strategies of collective bargaining as distributive and integrative, nevertheless, it is a known fact that collective bargaining transcends what the author had advanced as the definition. Even in his 2006 Edition, he could not overcome this deficiency in conceptualizing collective bargaining.

Robbins merely construed the concept purely from economic point of view and ultimately narrowed collective bargaining to an item of purchase or a commodity that can be exchanged in the market for money.

Perhaps this is in consonance with the Nigerian/African entrepreneur's thinking or conception of labor as a commodity or a factor of production. It is admissible that there is economic consideration to collective bargaining, however, to construe it in totality from the economic viewpoint is not only misleading but naive.

Budd (2008:269) submitted that the process of collective bargaining in "...labour relations almost always has the goal of producing a legally binding written contract that specifies wages, benefits, layoff policies, grievance procedures and many other terms and conditions of employment; the union at work is the union negotiating a contract". Like Robbins, he identified "bargaining sub-processes and strategies" to include distributive and integrative. The distributive bargaining process is one in which each of the parties tends to seek maximum gains and attempts to impose maximum losses on the other. This is referred to as a "Win-lose" situation or zero sum game. Integrative bargaining on the other hand seeks to unify the common interests of the parties in negotiation so that all can become better off. This is a "Win-Win" approach to collective bargaining and it has the tendency to reducing, if not totally eliminating conflicts in work relations.

Expatriating on the understanding of Beatrice and Sidney Webb on collective bargaining, Flanders in Ojo (1998:137) emphasized the "rule making process" of collective bargaining which according to the author transcends negotiation of economic terms of a contract and defines the rights and relationship among workers' union officials and employers. This rule making process of collective bargaining confers the jurisprudence status on it in labour relations.

Thomason in Cole (1997:340) sees collective bargaining "as a method of resolving conflicts which is characterized by its involvement of at least two opposed parties who have a different (even opposed) interest in the outcomes of decisions, but who come together voluntarily to decide matters of concern..." From Thomason's definition, Cole (1997) identified the following important features of collective bargaining:

- It emphasizes collective action, not individual action.
- The role of rule making and settlement of employment conditions.
- The aim of collective bargaining is the reach agreement eventually.
- Actors/parties to collective bargaining usually do not have identical interests, and conflict of interests arises.
- The voluntary nature of the activity.

Thomason's definition and Cole's deduction are of interest and note worthy on the grounds that they reflect collective bargaining as being partly a conflict resolution mechanism, which is very tangential to the ideas of Mary Parker Follett (in Shafritz and Hyde, 1992: 67) of employing "integration" in conflict resolution. Reasonable and effective (result-oriented) managers employ the strategy of integration, not domination or suppression in resolving conflict within the organization.

Cascio (2006:520) captures collective bargaining as the corner stone of labour relations and preceded to say that it “is a two-party transaction whereby both parties intend to resolve a conflict”. He expatiated with a poser: what constitutes a “good” settlement? He answered, “To be sure, the best outcome of negotiations occurs when both parties win. Sometimes, negotiations fall short of this ideal. A really bad bargain is one in which both parties lose”. The former situation typifies a model of integrative bargaining while the latter could imply deadlock situations.

Cascio (2006:521) further explored collective bargaining by examining negotiating behaviour in six areas namely: Planning time; exploration of options; common ground; long-term versus short-term orientation; setting limits; sequence and issue planning.

In presenting a pluralist view of industrial relations, Cole (2005:411) stated that “the aim of bargaining is to reach agreement eventually; there is usually a degree of conflict between the parties concerning both the means by which agreement may be reached, and the terms on which it is reached”. He corroborated that “as a general rule, managers, as buyers of labour, seek to achieve agreement at a minimum cost to the organization. The trade union representatives, as agents for labour, look for an agreement that incorporates the best possible terms of employment...” This reasoning is consistent with that of Elele (2008) on differences in interests, values and goals between unions and the managers of organizations.

Cole (2005:415) progressed by dividing agreement into procedural and substantive. Procedural agreements “are formal, written procedures that act as a voluntary code of conduct for the parties concerned...”. The parties concerned are managers and employees together with their union representatives. Substantive agreements “are formal, written agreements containing the terms under which, for the time being, employees are to be employed”. Such agreements run for limited or specified period of time. Fashoyin (1999:126-127) building on Flanders referred to substantive agreements as collective agreements which deals with “wage and working hours or to other job terms and conditions in the segment of employment covered by agreement”. Procedural agreement deals with such matters as the method to be used and the stages to be followed in the settlement of disputes, or perhaps the facilities and standing to be accorded to representatives of parties to the agreement”. Procedural agreements can be timeless (not time bound) and could function as the operative and recital clause to most industrial relations policies of organizations.

In his contribution, Luthans (2008:270-271) equated collective bargaining with Negotiation like some scholars did, but added an interesting side to it by positing that “negotiation can go beyond just resolving conflict and become a managerial skill for personal and organizational success”.

This argument suggests that collective bargaining should be elevated to the status of Managerial style and should be practiced as such. It behooves managers of organization to cultivate and imbibe this suggestion.

Luthans (2008) went further to identify common bias problems in collective bargaining which include: negotiators tendency to be overly affected by the frame, or form of presentation, of information in a negotiation; negotiators tend to non-rationally escalate commitment to a previously selected course of action, when it is no longer the most reasonable alternative; negotiators tend to assume that their gain must come at the expense of the other party and thereby miss opportunities for mutually beneficial trade-offs between parties; negotiator judgments tend to be anchored on irrelevant information, such as an initial offer; negotiators tend to rely on readily available information; negotiators tend to fail to consider information that is available by focusing on the opponent's perspective; negotiators tend to be over confident concerning the likelihood of attaining outcomes that favour the individual(s) involved.

Some of the above common bias problems which amounts to "halo-effect" in collective bargaining which presents issues as dichotomies by parties at negotiation (that implies: our side is right and your side is wrong) may not be totally tenable in our context and environment, Luthans cautioned against taking distributive or positional bargaining approach.

Ivancevich, Konopaske and Matteson (2005:374) opine that "the context or environment in which the negotiations are taking place may also be an important consideration, as may be the nature of the outcomes that are desired from the negotiating process. In many negotiating situations, this last consideration may be the most important." They counseled that "one useful way to think about desired outcomes is to distinguish between substantive and relationship outcomes". How the specific issues are settled is the goal of substantive outcomes; however, relationship outcomes has to do with negotiating in a manner designed primarily to maintain good relations between the parties. It should be noted that while the two issues are not mutually exclusive, the relative importance accorded them will dictate the choice of bargaining strategies.

In their discourse on this subject, Jones and Goerge (2006:615-616) affirmed that collective bargaining is "a particularly important conflict resolution technique for managers and other organizational members to use in situations where the parties to a conflict have approximately equal levels of power..." The authors however did not envisage or comment on situations in which parties to a conflict or bargain do not have "approximately equal levels of power". They identified distributive negotiation and integrative bargaining; and suggested the following strategies for integrative bargaining; emphasize super-ordinate goals; focus on the problem not the people; focus on interests, not demands; create new options for joint gain, focus on what is fair.

Dimowo and Shaibu (2005:239) posited that "negotiation can be seen as a decision-making among independent parties who do not share identical preferences." It is also "a process in which one or more representatives of two or more parties interact in an explicit attempt to reach a jointly acceptable position on one or more divisive issues." From these definitions, the centrality of communication to collective bargaining

is not in contention, just like other authors and scholars, what has not been stated is the nature, type and ingredients of the communication required in the collective bargaining process.

Onah (2008:384) building on Okoli (1999) averred that “Collective bargaining is an important interface between management and labour unions.” “It is a vehicle by which management (employers) and representatives (unions) of the workers attempt to reach a collective agreement on solving and avoiding problems related to compensation, retirement, fringe benefits, discipline, lay-offs, promotions, work scheduling, and other conditions of employment.” He corroborates, “thus, collective bargaining involves joint determination by workers and employers to solve problems and issues pertaining to human resources management.”

Onah (2008) joined other scholars in stating the ideal that “collective bargaining process is the foundation of industrial democracy”, but it is relieving that he added that unilateral regulation or primacy of wage commissions which has become a norm in the Nigerian Public Sector vitiates the ideal. Indeed, that industrial democracy cannot take firm footing in the Nigerian work/labour relations is systemic, this is reinforced by the fact that the democratic experience is wobbling despite the “rule of law” mantra.

The author stated conditions for collective bargaining and gave types/strategies for collective bargaining as: centralized or regulated and decentralized or deregulated. In centralized or regulated collective bargaining, the umbrella employers’ association negotiates collectively with unions as representatives of workers. This has the advantage of setting the baseline or minimum upon which individual employer can negotiate with house or enterprise unions. Deregulated bargaining is a process whereby an employer of labour negotiates wages and other conditions of service directly with representatives of workers (house unions) within the overall economic condition prevailing in the country. The rationale and driving force for deregulated bargaining is the ability to pay principle (Onah, 2008:385-387).

Methods of Research

In this study, we shall collect data from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source comprises data generated from focus group discussion and interviews administered to respondents. The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is a group centered interviewing technique targeted at eliciting information on group values, needs, beliefs, preferences, characteristics, problems, dynamics and their successes. The rationale for its adoption in this study is hinges on the fact that it has obvious advantages in collecting data from people who ordinarily would not feel free discussing certain sensitive subjects, unless they are with their in –group or peer group. In this study, the focused group discussion will be held with representatives of the institutions and agencies under study. This study prepared an interview guide that shall direct the course of discussion during the sessions.

Additionally, a research assistant will be used to help record the proceeding of the sessions both in writing and electronically where possible. The researcher in these sessions is to act as the moderator of the

interview sessions. The groups include workers, Labour Leaders, politicians, policy analysts and selected members of employee and management bodies. The use of focus group discussion with selected individuals will avail this study, the opportunities of eliciting reliable information on the true situation of things as it relates to these issue specific problems in terms of recommendations of the study. To support data from Focused Group Discussion, secondary data are obtained from an existing data bank or published literature. These data shall be obtained from books, journals, magazines, periodicals, newspapers, government publications/documents, symposia and workshop papers, communiqué, unpublished seminars and theses, and on line materials. Secondary data generated in the course of our research shall be analyzed using content analysis. Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative analysis and description of the manifest content of communications. Content analysis as a method of analyzing qualitative information shall be used to determine the relative emphasis of information on minimum wage and industrial relations.

Background to the Agitation for a New Minimum Wage in Nigeria by Labour Unions

The international workers' day also known as May Day was celebrated in May 1 of every year has been dedicated since 1880s to celebrate the labour force globally. In Nigeria, the day was marked with March past at stadia and symposia. Most significantly is the formal demand by Nigeria labour unions. Nigeria Labour Congress and the Trade Union Congress on that day made a demand for a new minimum wage of N56,000. This demand has been generating a lot of responses from various segments of the society since it was made public. While a segment of Nigerian society believed that the workers unions are in order to demand for upward review of their wages; a sizable number of people has been castigating the labour unions for making unreasonable, ill-timed, and unrealistic demand. The latter group believed that with about 27 states allegedly owning backlog of salaries and pensions under the current minimum wage of N18,000; while many private enterprises are not able to break even let alone make profit due to the high cost of doing business in Nigeria, it is implausible for employers to pay the new minimum wage.

Labour unions have been stoutly defending their proposal for the new wage. They allegedly arrived at the new wage by multiplying the amount the federal government use in feeding a prisoner which is N300 per meal and N900 per day multiplies by 30 days of a month in addition to housing, transport and other allowances. Also, since the last minimum wage came into force in March 2011 and it was meant to be reviewed every five years, workers not wanting to sleep on their economic rights, decided to push forward their case for the new wage. Furthermore, labour unions insist that despite dwindling oil prices and distributable income to the three tiers of government, if the chief executives, namely, the president, governors and Local Government chairpersons will re-adjust their priorities, cut cost of governance and promote fiscal discipline, they should be able to pay the new minimum wage. It is noteworthy that NLC/TUC is not under any illusion that government will adopt their proposal hook, line and sinker. They are not unmindful that the proposed N56,000 is negotiable and that given the history of wage negotiation in Nigeria, it will take a long time to conclude hence, it is better to start early.

It is significant that since the last agreed minimum wage in March 2011, state governors have been kicking against it and have on several occasions threatened to re-trench workers if government will not review the revenue sharing formula to enable state and local government to earn more. Indeed, in November 2015, chairman of the Nigeria Governors Forum, Alhaji Abdulaziz Yari of Zamfara State who addressed the press after their meeting said that the N18,000 national minimum wage promulgated into law in 2011 was no longer sustainable because of the fall in the price of crude oil. The governor also claimed that the national minimum wage was 'imposed on them by the Federal government'.

For the records, the last minimum wage was not imposed. It is important to understand how the issue of the national minimum wage came about. Nigeria joined the league of International Labour Organization member countries that set minimum wage for their workers in 1981. The last time a minimum wage was set before the 2011 one was in 2000 with effect from May 1, 2001. Then, the wage was set at a paltry N5,500. It took ten years to review that benchmark through a collective bargaining mechanism. Nigeria Labour Congress made a demand for wage increase in 2009 after a thorough study of the salary of political office holders' pre and post consolidation era, as well as careful examination of the minimum annual wage levels in African countries. The study shows that Nigerian worker is among the least remunerated in the world. In the NLC estimated cost of meeting basic needs for a representative family done in February 2009, a sum total of N58,500 was arrived at.

As Eme (2009) among others have posited, countries' minimum wage across the world is usually a nery issue because it, to some extent, is a determining factor of the living standard of a country. Nigeria is no exception. The issue has been a thorny one between Nigeria's labour unions and politicians at different times over the decades of Nigeria's existence as a nation. On February 23, 2011, the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria approved Eighteen Thousand Naira (N18, 000) as minimum wage for the Nigerian worker. The bill which was given a speedy passage by the Upper Chamber increased the minimum wage from N7, 500 to N18, 000(then USD\$112.00). Today, the federal government of Nigeria is honoring her part of the deal, but not so with other stakeholders such as some state governments and private enterprises among whom, paying that minimum remains an illusion. Honoring her promise to pay such an amount has not been so easy. This is because of the current economic recession and the fall in oil price in the international market. These have made it difficult for the federal government and state governments to implement the agreed N18, 000 minimum wage salary. Again, about 75 percent of Nigeria's budget is devoted to recurrent expenditure. In effect, that accretion of wages has put Nigeria at the edge of the development cliff because capital projects, which are critical for economic development, would appear to be lagging, which discourages trade and investment.

On the other hand, there is the school of thought expounded by economists Card and Kruger (1995) that higher wages reduce unemployment in an economy. For instance, when people earn higher, they can afford to employ other people to do those personal jobs they would not otherwise have afforded. Also, they would be able to garner funds for investment, for which they would need labour to manage, thus expanding the

economy and reducing unemployment. Higher wages, it is argued, also curbs the incidence of corruption; because when a person earns enough to care for his and his family's basic needs, the inducement for corruption minimizes. From another angle, a 1995 World Development Report (World Bank, 1995:75) on labour markets said that "Minimum wages may help protect the most poverty-stricken workers in industrial countries, but they clearly do not in developing nation. But it should be noted that Nigeria is not an industrial country.

NLC however decided to demand for a new national minimum wage of N52,200 which the Union considers approximate least Minimum Annual Wage Levels in African Countries, the minimum cost of providing basic needs for the worker and his/her immediate family and the cost of living data. According to Eme (2009:16), the Nigerian minimum wage was last reviewed five years ago in 2011. Then the issues were viewed in the light of comparative wages paid in other countries. The table below captures the thesis:

Table 1: Comparison: Minimum wages Across the Globe

Country	Date of National Minimum Wage	National Currency	Old National Minimum Wage	Current National Minimum wage	Wage changes between Old and New
United States	2016	\$	1,257	1,257 \$	11.62%
United Kingdom	2016	£	1,110	1,645 \$	10.89%
Germany	2016	€	1,473	1,604 \$	0
France	2016	€	1,467	1,597 \$	0.62%
Japan	2014	¥	780	7 \$	-99.54%
Spain	2016	€	764	832 \$	1.02%
Portugal	2016	€	618	673 \$	4.95%
Greece	2016	€	684	744 \$	0
Ireland	2016	€	1,546	1,684 \$	5.78%
Afghanistan	2013	؍	5,000		
Albania	2016	Lek	22,000	175 \$	-0.82%
Armenia	2014		66,138	163 \$	39.80%
Angola	2010		9,371		
Argentina	2016	\$	6,060	466 \$	-22.38%
Australia	2015	\$	2,812	2,306 \$	17,233.00%
Azerbaijan	2013	Man	105	134 \$	10.16%
Bangladesh	2013		5,300	66 \$	78.11%
Belgium	2016	€	1,502	1,635 \$	0

Burkina Faso	2013		30,684		
Bulgaria	2016	Лв	420	234 \$	16.67%
Bahrain	2011		300	798 \$	
Burundi	2013		3,467	210 \$	14.81%
Benin	2013		31,625	225 \$	-16.58%
Bolivia	2014	\$b	1,440	693 \$	-3.39%
Brazil	2016	R\$	880		
Bahamas	2010	\$	693	100 \$	1.06%
Bhutan	2013		3,000	194 \$	4.20%
Botswana	2013	P	780	322 \$	9.98%
Belarus	2014	p.	1,841,483	1,596 \$	7.13%
Belize	2012	BZ\$	644		
Canada	2015	\$	1,851		
Democratic Republic of the Congo	2011		36,400	210 \$	14.81%
Ivory Coast	2013		60,000	225 \$	-16.58%
Chile	2016	\$	250,000	353 \$	3.30%
Cameroon	2013		28,246		
China	2013	¥	1,400	225 \$	10.28%
Colombia	2016	\$	804,363	255 \$	-9.35%
Costa Rica	2015	₡	332,655	614 \$	12.44%
Cuba	2011	₱	225		
Cyprus	2014	€	870	1,200 \$	1.75%
Czech Republic	2016	Kč	9,900	399 \$	10.43%
Dominican Republic	2014	RD\$	11,752	275 \$	54.15%
Algeria	2013		18,000	231 \$	-5.27%
Ecuador	2013	\$	318	318 \$	6.80%
Estonia	2016	€	430	468 \$	10.26%
Egypt	2013	£	700	110 \$	-7.27%
Ethiopia	2011		420		
Fiji	2012	\$	589		
Gabon	2013		150,000		
Georgia	2014		20	12 \$	-8.62%

Ghana	2013	¢	141	75 \$	-1.32%
The Gambia	2013		1,300		
Equatorial Guinea	2013		129,035		
Guatemala	2013	Q	2,392	303 \$	1.25%
Guinea-Bissau	2013		19,030		
Guyana	2013	\$	35,000		
Hong Kong	2014	\$	30	4 \$	-99.55%
Honduras	2013	L	6,532	327 \$	-1.17%
Haiti	2011		6,500		
Hungary	2016	Ft	111,000	387 \$	6.10%
Indonesia	2013	Rp	1,332,400	138 \$	9.86%
Israel	2016	₪	4,694	1,203 \$	14.31%
India	2013	₹	2,990	55 \$	-5.29%
Iran	2011	ریال	3,303,000	319 \$	14.04%
Jamaica	2013	J\$	21,667		
Jordan	2013		150		
Kenya	2012		13,471	158 \$	10.60%
Kyrgyzstan	2011	ЛБ	690		
Cambodia	2013	៛	80		
Comoros	2013		55,000		
South Korea	2015	₩	1,166,220	1,061 \$	24,420.89%
Kuwait	2011		60	214 \$	10.87%
Kazakhstan	2013	ЛБ	18,660	124 \$	3.45%
Laos	2013	₭	626,000		
Lebanon	2011	£	500,000	330 \$	
Sri Lanka	2009	Rs	5,888	52 \$	13.27%
Lesotho	2011		935		
Lithuania	2016	€	350	381 \$	16.67%
Luxembourg	2016	€	1,923	2,094 \$	0
Latvia	2016	€	370	403 \$	2.78%
Libya	2013		450		
Moldova	2013		1,400	116 \$	1.48%
Montenegro	2015	€	288	350 \$	0
Madagascar	2013		108,019		

Mali	2013		28,460		
Mongolia	2014	₮	192,000		
Mauritania	2011		30,000	106 \$	44.18%
Malta	2016	€	728	793 \$	1.05%
Mauritius	2013	Rs	4,493	147 \$	1.00%
Maldives	2010		3,100		
Malawi	2013		8,242		
Mexico	2015	\$	1,801	122 \$	6.83%
Malaysia	2013	RM	900	294 \$	
Mozambique	2013	MT	3,943		
Niger	2013		30,047		
Nigeria	2011	₦	18,000	116 \$	-1.32%
Nicaragua	2013	C\$	3,484	145 \$	4.94%
Netherlands	2016	€	1,508	1,642 \$	0.40%
Nepal	2013	Rs	8,000	91 \$	23.20%
New Zealand	2015	\$	2,535	1,985 \$	11.79%
Oman	2013	ريال	325	845 \$	59.49%
Panama	2013	B/.	366	366 \$	-1.93%
Peru	2014	S/.	750	268 \$	-12.74%
Papua New Guinea	2013		437		
Philippines	2014	₱	466	10 \$	-96.62%
Pakistan	2013	Rs	10,000	103 \$	13.31%
Poland	2016	Zł	1,850	474 \$	5.30%
State of Palestine	2013	₪	1,450		
Paraguay	2014	Gs	1,660	0 \$	-99.91%
Romania	2016	Lei	1,050	253 \$	7.20%
Serbia	2016	Дин	28,403	255 \$	-0.63%
Russia	2016	₽	7,238	99 \$	-6.73%
Rwanda	2013		2,167		
Saudi Arabia	2013	ريال	3,000	800 \$	
Solomon Islands	2010	\$	780		
Sudan	2013		425		
Slovenia	2015	€	791	960 \$	0.20%
Slovakia	2016	€	405	441 \$	6.58%
Sierra Leone	2013		25,000		

Senegal	2013		36,244		
El Salvador	2013	\$	198	198 \$	2.00%
Syria	2010	£	6,110		
Swaziland	2013		657		
Chad	2013		60,000		
Togo	2011		28,000		
Thailand	2013	฿	7,800	255 \$	1.59%
Tajikistan	2013		250		
Timor-Leste	2013	\$	115	115 \$	-1.94%
Tunisia	2012		259	173 \$	4.41%
Trinidad and Tobago	2013	TT\$	2,167	338 \$	-1.91%
Taiwan	2013	NT\$	19,047	656 \$	3.72%
Tanzania	2013		100,000		
Ukraine	2013	₴	1,218	152 \$	4.97%
Uganda	2013		6,000	2 \$	
Uruguay	2013	\$U	7,920	408 \$	10.57%
Uzbekistan	2013	Ў	96,105		
Venezuela	2013	Bs	2,973	693 \$	42.48%
Vietnam	2013	₫	1,150,000		
South Africa	2013	R	2,474	292 \$	0.97%
Zambia	2013		700,000		

Source: Expansion Country economy.com (2016). National Minimum Wage.

In the table above, Germany, India, Norway, Singapore, Italy, Sweden, Denmark and Finland are not listed of the forty largest economies in the world. For Germany, except for construction workers, electrical workers, janitors, roofers, painters, and letter carriers, minimum wage is often set by collective bargaining agreements in other sectors of the economy and enforceable by law. In India, It varies according to the state and to the sector of industry (Expansion Country economy.com, 2016). The running wages for unskilled labour ranges from about \$3 per day to \$6 per day depending on the location. In Norway, wages normally fall within a national scale negotiated by labour, employers, and local governments. Singapore does not have a set minimum wage. Italy's minimum wage is set through collective bargaining agreements on a sector-by-sector basis.

Sweden's minimum wage is not definite. It is set by annual collective bargaining contracts. Denmark's also is not definite. Instead, it is negotiated between unions and employer associations; the average minimum wage for all private and public sector collective bargaining agreements is currently 109 kroner (\$19) per hour.

Regarding Finland, the law requires all employers, including non-unionized ones, to pay minimum wages agreed to in collective bargaining agreements; almost all workers are supported under such arrangements. The positive outlook of the table is that minimum wage, though important for economic growth and development, is not necessarily a prerequisite to be in that league of elite economies.

In order to negotiate this request from NLC and TUC, federal government set up a tripartite committee made up of representatives from the government, labour and the organized private sector. On the part of the government were four cabinet ministers, three state governors and representatives of the National Salaries, Incomes and Wages Commission. Labour drew its representatives from the NLC and TUC, while representatives of the organised private sector include Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association and those of Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture. The Committee was chaired by former Chief Justice of Nigeria, Hon. Justice Alfa Belgore (Rtd.). The Committee met for over one year, dialoguing and negotiating with different stakeholders. All the 36 State governors as well as the Nigeria Governors Forum (NGF) were formally written to make input into the negotiation. While some of the governors were said to have recommended a minimum wage of about N20,000 and above, the Committee decided to propose N18,000 in order to make it easy for all concerned employer of labour to implement. It was also proposed that the new wage will apply to only organization with a minimum of 50 workers in its employment. It was after this con-sensual agreement that the proposal was drafted into a bill and presented to the National Assembly for legislation. This bill was passed and signed into law by ex-President Goodluck Jonathan on March 23, 2011(Eme, 2009).

The Tables 1-111; below capture the information that guided the Enugu state harmonized salary structure Committee (2011) to arrive at the existing minimum wage and which will equally guide the new agitation with minor adjustment. The template guided the Enugu State and served as our bench mark for analysis. The minimum wages given by the state government covers the gross amount, that is salary paid before deduction of taxes and social security contributions, which vary from one country to another. Also excluded from calculations are regulated paid days off, including public holidays, sick pay and annual- leave.

Table 1: Expected sustainable budget for low income family (in N)

S/N	Items	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly	Monthly Pay	Surplus/(Deficit)
1	Food(1)	1,601	11,205	44,820	582,660		GL 1 step 14
2	Shelter	357	2,500	10,000	120,000		
3	Clothing(2)	228	1,594	6,377	82,900		
4	Education(3)	426	2,985	11,938	155,200		
5	Medicals	150	1,050	4,200	54,600		
6	Utilities(4)	184	1,288	5,154	67,000		
7	Transportation(5)	198	1,385	5,538	72,000		
8	Kitchen Utensils	27	192	769	10,000		

9	Toiletries(6)	114	796	3,185	41,400		
10	Mother's care	54	192	1,538	20,000		
11	Father's care	54	192	1,538	20,000		
12	Children's care	54	192	1,538	20,000		
13	Social Welfare	27	192	769	10,000		
Total		3,474	24,149	96,597	1,255,760	30,701	(65,896)

Source: Enugu State Harmonized Salary Structure 2011

Table 2: Expected sustainable budget for middle income family (in N)

S/N	Items	Daily	Weekl y	Monthly	Yearly	Monthly Pay	Surplus/(Deficit)
1	Food	6416	44,910	179,640	2,155,680	GL12 step 11	
2	Shelter	63	438	1750	21000		
3	Clothing	1185	8297	33,188	398,260		
4	Education	1648	11,536	46,143	553,720		
5	Medicals	256	1792	7167	86,000		
6	Utilities	405	2833	11,330	135,960		
7	Transportation	311	2176	8704	104,448		
8	Kitchen Utensils	196	1371	5483	65800		
9	Toiletries	189	1320	5280	63,360		
10	Mother's care	453	3170	12,680	152,160		
11	Father's care	68	475	1,900	22,800		
12	Children's care	29	200	800	9,600		
13	Social Welfare	1224	8,567	34,267	411,200		
14	Car Maintenance	432	3021	12,083	145,000		
15	Others	229	1604	6,417	77,000		
Total	13,104	91,710	352,397	,392,388	60,522	(291,875)	

Source: Enugu State Harmonized Salary Structure 2011

Table 3: Expected sustainable budget for high income family (in N)

S/N	Items	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly	Monthly Pay	Surplus/(Deficit)
1	Food	10,860	76,018	304,072	3,648,868	GL 16 step 9	

2	Shelter	4,167	29,170	116,700		1,400,000	
3	Clothing	2,750	19,252	77,008		924,100	
4	Education	1,045	7,317	29,267		351,200	
5	Medicals	512	3,583	14,333		172,000	
6	Utilities	2,358	16,504	66,017		792,200	
7	Transportation	200	1400	5,600		67,200	
8	Kitchen Utensils	417	2,917	11,667		140,000	
9	Toiletries	189	1,320	5,280		63,360	

Source Enugu State Harmonized Salary Structure 2011

It is worthy to note that the proposed increase will automatically come with some provisos including reduction in the number of civil servants and merging ministries and agencies. For instance, ministers and commissioners are likely to lead the initiative on the downsizing. Also, the Efficiency Unit in the Federal Ministry of Finance, which is saddled with coming up with cost reduction strategies, is working on the template for the reduction. Again the government, though would not devalue the naira, it would indeed embark on what it termed 'appropriate' and adopt a more flexible value for the Naria, which may be in the region of N283 and 380 to the dollar.

Meanwhile, fuel scarcity persisted in most of the major cities of the country recently despite hopes that petrol would be available since government at the June Federal Executive Council meeting raised the pump price of petrol to N145 per litre. Yet, some outlets are retailing for as high as between N150 and N175 per litre. Since the new price regime came into effect, the Federal Government has called on Nigerians to stand by the current administration over the recent increase in pump price of petrol, saying the increase is not meant to worsen the sufferings of the masses but aimed at ensuring availability and sustainability of the product.

But the NLC President, Ayuba Wabba, berated the government that promised to create jobs but was now tinkering with the idea of embarking on one of the most massive job losses Nigeria has witnessed. [This is because Nigerian leaders cannot be talking about creating jobs and at the same time be talking about mass sacking of workers in order to pay the proposed new minimum wage.](#) This is a government that promised jobs and now, it wants to embark on mass sacking of workers. It is difficult to reconcile the two extreme ends. Nigerians will not accept any proposal for job. The challenge of retrenching workers has always been that government at all levels has failed to make provision for payment of entitlements.

Besides, with the upward review of the Price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS), otherwise known as petrol from N86.50 to maximum of N145 per litre (about \$0.73), the cost of petrol in Nigeria is about the

lowest in Africa and among some oil producing countries. Data obtained from Global Petrol Prices, showed petrol in Chad costs \$0.78 per litre; Togo, \$0.80 per litre; Kenya, \$0.81 per litre; South Africa, \$0.84 a litre; \$0.85 a litre; Niger, \$0.90; Ghana, \$0.92; Sierra Leone, \$0.94; Uganda, \$0.97 and Angola, \$1.00 per litre. Also, in Rwanda, Mali, Malawi, Guinea, a litre of petrol sells for \$1.15, \$1.15; \$1.17; \$1.17 respectively, which are far higher than the price in Nigeria. The table below captures the minimum wages in some selected OPEC Countries, their population, crude oil production, population and minimum wage.

Table 5: PMS Price per liter in OPEC countries (in Naira)

s/n	OPEC countries	Population	Production mbpd	PMS Price per litre	Minimum Wage
1	Venezuela	29,105,632	2,340	3.61	95,639
2	Kuwait	3,566,437	2,340	34.54	161,461
3	Saudi Arabia	27,136,977	9,800	25.12	99,237
4	Iran	75,330,000	3,700	102.05	86,585
5	Qatar	1,696,563	810	34.54	101,250
6	UAE	8,264,070	2,500	78.18	101,250
7	Algeria	36,423,000	1,360	63.55	55,957
8	Libya	5,670,688	1,650	26.69	23,813
9	Iraq	30,399,572	1,481	59.66	25,813
10	Nigeria	167,000,000	2,250	135-145.00	18,000

Sources: Eme and Ugwu, (2016:23) the Labour and the Demand for a New Minimum Wage in Nigeria: How Realistic is the Demand? (Mimeo)

To address the issues as captured in Tables 2 &3, a 15-man Committee was inaugurated by the Federal Government on the implementation of the new minimum wage for workers. The 15-man Committee will review the Federal Government's liberalization of the downstream sector of the petroleum industry, leading to the new fuel pump price of N145 per litre. The Committees will discuss and recommend a new national minimum wage, the N500 billion palliatives being proposed by the Federal Government and the re-constitution of the Petroleum Products Pricing and Regulatory Agency Board, among other issues, before presenting their recommendations to government.

Table 4: Monthly minimum wages in Nigeria public Service (in Naira)

s/n	States	Minimum Wage	s/n	States	Minimum Wage
1	Abia	20,100	20	Katsina	18,000
2	Adamawa	18,000	21	Kebbi	18,000
3	AkwaIbom	18,000	22	Kogi	18,000
4	Anambra	18,000	23	Kwara	18,000

5	Bauchi	18,000	24	Lagos	18,000
6	Bayelsa	18,000	25	Nasarawa	18,000
7	Benue	18,000	26	Niger	18,000
8	Borno	18,229	27	Ogun	18,250
9	Cross River	18,000	28	Ondo	22,000*
10	Delta	18,000	29	Osun	18,000
11	Ebonyi	18,000	30	Oyo	18,000
12	Edo	20,100	31	Plateau	18,000
13	Ekiti	18,000	32	Rivers	18,000
14	Enugu	18,000	33	Sokoto	18,000
15	Gombe	18,000	34	Taraba	18,000
16	Imo	20,100	35	Yobe	18,000
17	Jigawa	18,000	36	Zamfara	18,000
18	Kaduna	18,000	37	FCT	18,000
19	Kano	18,000	38	FGN	18,000

Sources: Office of the Heads of Service *Effective April 2013

Table 4: Monthly Minimum wages in Nigeria public Service (in Naira)

S/N	States	Minimum Wage	S/N	States	Minimum Wage
1	Abia	20,100	20	Katsina	18,000
2	Adamawa	18,000	21	Kebbi	18,000
3	AkwaIbom	18,000	22	Kogi	18,000
4	Anambra	18,000	23	Kwara	18,000
5	Bauchi	18,000	24	Lagos	18,000
6	Bayelsa	18,000	25	Nasarawa	18,000
7	Benue	18,000	26	Niger	18,000

Conclusion and Recommendations

The first conclusion from the paper is that the question of minimum wage for Nigerian workers has been a thorny issue from time immemorial and has been over flogged by various labour unions, having always been a confrontational cause for vigorous and aggressive action in pursuit of political and social solutions to workers' economic anguish and despair. The second conclusion is that the Nigerian worker's take-home pay

cannot even take him home conveniently and since that was the case, it will not help in making the ends meet for he or she will continue to wallow in abject poverty as soon as his meager stipend has been exhausted.

The third conclusion is that so many factors combine to make a poor worker's pay grossly insufficient for his daily needs, chiefly among them is the weak purchasing power of the Naira which combined with unfavorable market forces to rob him of his hard earned monthly pay, thereby rendering him a suffering person. The fourth conclusion is that the gross pay of a chief executive of a big-time business enterprise, if given to a laborer of that organization, will not be sufficient enough to cater for his needs and that of his family. In other words, nobody in Nigeria can absolutely depend on his salary without resorting to other means, including illegality, to ensure that he keeps body and soul together.

These factors explain why over the last two decades countless Nigerians in different sectors tell disheartening stories of intense struggle to make ends meet in a country where corruption and mismanagement of resources among government officials is unpreventable. In fact, government officials and their political mentors brazenly steal from public coffer to gratify their thieving appetites. And because of that, their desire to maintain their bogus lifestyles at all costs forces them to indulge in all forms of vices and corrupt practices.

There are however issues and challenges that militate against the smooth processing of this ideal situation. In view of this, the under listed recommendations are proffered:

- 1) From the perspective of the state governments, inequitable distribution of resources is a major hindrance to their ability to comply with the new wage structure. There should therefore be an upward revision of the present revenue sharing formula. But in interim the states should make effort to diversify their economies and revenue bases.
- 2) The state should also look inward and find ways to harness the abundant human and natural resources that every state of the country is blessed with. They should also endeavor to cut down on basic running costs and put a check on corruption and other practices that impact negatively on their finances such as the ghost workers' syndrome.
- 3) Civil servants should take a more positive and proactive approach to the services they render. This will not only create wealth for the state but also justify present national minimum wages and the call for future increases.
- 4) Revision of the minimum wage is necessary to benchmark rising cost of living and international trends. Consideration should however be given to economic and financial realities of the country such as the current fall in oil price and the militant attacks in the Niger Delta.
- 5) There should be acts of legislature that will encourage the various arms of government to improve on social services. These should be in the areas of service delivery such as health care, education, housing, transportation and other social infrastructure. This will reduce the incessant clamor for wage increase.
- 6)

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