

## Strategies for Conflict Resolution in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki

<sup>1</sup> Nwuzor, Chidi Iroko

[nwuzorchidi@yahoo.com](mailto:nwuzorchidi@yahoo.com)

<sup>2</sup> Njoku, Chimee Mercy

[okorochimeem@gmail.com](mailto:okorochimeem@gmail.com)

<sup>1,2</sup> Department of Public Administration

Ebonyi State University Abakaliki, Nigeria

Corresponding Author: [nwuzorchidi@yahoo.com](mailto:nwuzorchidi@yahoo.com)

### Abstract

*The study examines strategy for conflict resolution in Ebonyi State University Abakaliki. The research was anchored on Power Parity Theory of Industrial Relations propounded by Dubin in 1960. Descriptive survey design was adopted to study a sample of 660 Management and Employees of the University. Data for the study were collected from primary and secondary sources. The instrument used for data collection was structured questionnaire. The research applied Statistical tables and Mean Deviation in data analysis. Findings revealed that negotiation has significantly helped in reducing industrial dispute in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki; Mediation has significantly helped in curtailing the tide of employer-employee face-off in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki; and conciliation has significantly reduced industrial disharmony between Management and Staff of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. The implication of the findings is that staff productivity would continue to elude the University if the principles of collective bargaining (conflict resolution strategies) were not adequately applied in resolving any industrial dispute. Hence, it was recommended among others that, there was the need for Management and Staff Members of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, to always engage in negotiation in order to ensure job commitment among staff of the University; there is need for Management and staff of Ebonyi State University to always engage in mediation in order to ensure efficient job performance among staff of the University; and there is need for Management and staff to always engage in conciliation in order to prevent industrial dispute among staff of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.*

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## 1. Introduction

Conflict Resolution has been conceptualized as a process through which workers come together and send representatives to negotiate over their terms and conditions of employment. In other words, it is a variety of approaches aimed at terminating or uprooting conflict through the constructive solving of problems, distinct from management and transformation. It has become a veritable tool for improving service delivery of workers especially in public sector organizations (Abah, 2011). It is seen as a collective alternative to individual bargaining and a techniques used by trade unions to further their basic purpose of maintaining and improving the working conditions of their members. In a related sense, Adebile, and Ojo (2022) opines that conflict resolution not only concerned with the negotiation of a formal labour agreement but also with the day to day dealings between management and the unions.

All over the world, dispute has been noticed as one of the most reoccurring phenomenon in the employer and employee relations of every organization (Mamoria, 2019). This is because in every organization, there is always a time of disagreement between the employers and the employees on either wages/salary issues or the general conditions of service of workers. This phenomenon is noticeable in almost every Public and Private Organizations of both developed and developing countries. In view of that, Adebile, and Ojo (2022) submits that dispute becomes inevitable in the work environment of different organizations due to their complex nature. And this results from the fact that the goals pursued by the management and that of the employees are at times incompatible and therefore degenerates into industrial disputes. On the other hand, apart from the complex nature of organizations, other factors according to Umoren (2001) as cited in Jaja and Umezuruike (2017) like different backgrounds of workers, in terms of needs, goals, skills, talent, status, aggressiveness, gender disposition and other diverse attributes of employees and management makes disputes unavoidable in organizations. This shows that no organization regardless of its size or nature of operation is immune from industrial dispute (Mamoria, 2019). Suffice it to say that no organization is so excellent and successful that it is free from internal disputes. Industrial dispute according to Adebile, and Ojo (2022) refers to a stage in industrial relations when a group or some members of an organization decides to express their grievances over perceived dissatisfaction on the terms and conditions of their labour agreement. When this occurs, the functional activities of the organization are usually brought to a slow pace and in most cases to an abrupt closure. Thus the parties involved may be propelled to seek resolution through any of the dispute management techniques such as collective bargaining, litigation, arbitration, mediation, conciliation among others (Mamoria, 2019).

Historically, collective bargaining or conflict resolution originated in England at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century through the works of a British labour historian named Sidney Webb in 1891. According to Webb in his book titled industrial democracy workers in Union alternatively use peaceful negotiation processes to influence management of an organization in order to obtain various benefits for their members. Webb developed the phrase "Collective Bargaining" as a technique to explain the benefits that can be achieved by employees of organizations in England when they concert their efforts together and send representatives to negotiate on work agreement un- behalf of the whole employees than when series of contracts arc made individually with the employers of labour (Mamoria, 2019). Ever since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, collective bargaining as a conflict resolution strategy, has gained prominence as a better technique of dispute management in Public Organizations both at national and international levels. For instance, the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1960 recognized its efficacy in the management of industrial disputes and made it one of the leading techniques for negotiations about working conditions and terms of employment between an employer and employees (Mamoria, 2019). In the United States of America (USA), the National Railway Act 1952 and National Labour Relations Act 1956 respectively made it illegal for any employer to deny union right to an employee. However, a bold step to reinforce this directive came in 1962 when President John. F. Kennedy issued an executive order granting federal employees the right to unionized and collectively bargain for their employment terms and conditions (Thomas, 2010).

The right to resolve conflict was also recognized through the International Human Right Convention. For instance, Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights identifies the ability to organize trade unions as a fundamental human right and better means to collectively bargain (Hlele, 2018). Item 2(a) of the International Labour Organization on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work also upheld the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collectively bargain as an essential right of workers.

In Nigeria the need for conflict resolution was recognized as a reasonable technique for industrial dispute management when it first got enshrined in the Nigerian Trade Disputes Acts of 1974 and was eventually amended in 1978 (Abah, 2011). Consequently, to ensure that its practice is further encouraged in the country, it was equally included in the Nigerian Labour Act 2004 (Mamoria, 2019). Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, being the study area of this research is one of the Public Organizations in Nigeria and Ebonyi State in particular that pursues management of industrial disputes through Collective Bargaining (conflict resolution). It was formally a faculty branch of the old Anambra State University of Science and Technology (ASUTECH). It was later transformed into Faculty of Medicine and Agriculture of the Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUTH) in 1992 via the creation of the state in 1991 and finally became Ebonyi State University in 1999 after the creation of the State in 1996. It is located at Abakaliki the Ebonyi State Capital Territory with four campuses strategically situated at Ezamgbo, Ishicke, Cas and Presco respectively. Currently, it operates on eight (8) faculties with Prof. Chigozie Ogbu as the Vice Chancellor.

As a Public organization, it has experienced different industrial disputes which usually manifest when the goals of the management are incompatible with that of the staff. This has been made manifest in the incessant strikes that the Non- Academic staff has embarked upon in recent times especially the most recent strike that took place in February 2021. In other words, dispute arises whenever the management of the university or state government fails to fulfill the terms of labour agreement with the staff which could bother on salary / wages; delay in promotion, safety needs of the workers among others issues or other better conditions of service. Other source of dispute also occurs when the federal government fails to implement the terms of labour agreement with all the Non- Academic Staff of Union of Universities (NASUU) in Nigeria of which Ebonyi State University is among. Several efforts have been made in resolving conflicts in Ebonyi State University such as joint meetings and negotiations between the union, the management and the government, release of certain amounts of money for the development of the institution as witnessed from the outcome of the 2013 and 2018 industrial actions among others. Such efforts were geared towards ensuring steady academic calendar and improved service delivery to the public and the students which has resulted in the performance such as students graduating as at and when

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Different cases of industrial disputes in public organizations are reported overtime in both national and international dailies which often result from the inability of management of organizations or government to religiously fulfill their terms of agreement and maintain a better working environment of their workers, in Nigeria, cases of inability to pay workers salary as at when due, reduction in the wages / salary without prior information of the workers, delay in promotion and indiscriminate layoff of workers are rampant which have led to industrial disputes and possible closure of such organizations.

In Ebonyi State University, industrial disputes have occurred in different occasions and consequent shutdown of academic activities for months which have resulted from the inability of the university management and government to fulfill terms of labour agreement with their employees especially the academic staff, first among these is the inability of the State Government to pay subventions which were used to augment with the funds raised within the University to pay workers salary and funding of some infrastructures in the University as at when due. Secondly, the Consolidated University Academic Salary Structure (CONUASS), a salary structure for the Academic staff of Universities and Consolidated Tertiary Institutions Salary Structure II (CONTISS II), a salary structure for Non-Academic Staff of Universities are not paid any longer (Agbo, 2018). On the other hand, the downsizing of workers and the indiscriminate laying off of many staff without prior information, bad leadership style among other have seriously resulted into industrial disputes which at all times degenerates into strike actions.

However, the major problem that motivated the researcher into this study is the inability to utilize collective bargaining in conflict resolution in public organizations. It is against this backdrop that the researcher is prompted to investigate the Effects of Collective Bargaining on the Service Delivery of Ebonyi State University: A Study of Non-Academic Staff. In view of the stated problem, the following questions were raised to guide the study:

1. To what extent has negotiation influenced conflict resolution in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki?
2. To what extent has mediation influenced conflict resolution in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki?
3. To what extent has conciliation reduced industrial unrest between management and staff of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki?

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The broad objective of the study was to investigate on the effects of conflict resolution strategies on the service delivery of Ebonyi State University Staff: A study of non-academic staff and specifically;

1. To determine the extent to which negotiation has influenced conflict resolution in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.
2. To ascertain the extent to which mediation has helped in reducing industrial disputes in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.
3. To examine the extent to which conciliation has reduced industrial unrest between management and staff of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

This research is anchored on Power Parity Theory of industrial relations propounded by an American sociologist called Dubin in 1960. The theory upholds that industrial dispute in an organization presents a situation of power parity, i.e power equality between the employers and the employees of the organization in which any perceived grievance or threat to embark on strike actions in the organizations is usually neutralized or quickly brought to an end through collective bargaining process since both parties are aware that muscle flexing will damage the economy or destabilize the society of which they may be blamed for it (Abah, 2011). This theory is considered relevant to the study because it tends to emphasize on the reason why many employers and employees of different organizations desires to adopt collective bargaining in the management of their industrial dispute instead of using other techniques. The reason is simply because both parties believe that collective bargaining gives them the freedom and right to negotiate on the terms and conditions of labour agreement on a round table platform than taking other actions such as strike, lockout or closure of the organization that can cause harm to the economy. Power parity provides a condition favorable to the peaceful resolution of internal armed conflict as measured by negotiation, ceasefire, and settlement. The condition of power parity increases the likelihood of negotiation, ceasefire, and settlement.

## **3. The Concept of Collective Bargaining**

Collective bargaining as a concept has been variously defined. According to Agbo (2018), collective bargaining is a process through which workers come together and send representatives to negotiate over their terms and condition of employment with the management. According to him, collective bargaining was seen as a collective alternative to individual bargaining or one of the techniques used by trade unions to further their basic purpose of maintaining and improving the working conditions of their members. Agbo's definition of collective bargaining lays emphasis on the importance of collective action on the part of workers in establishing and negotiating formal agreements with their employers. For instance, there has been lingering issue of New Minimum Wage implementation between the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the federal government where negotiations have been on towards increasing the minimum wage from N18, 000 to N30000 and resolving the disputes (Shuaib, 2018).

In a related sense, Chenata (2012) opined that collective bargaining is concerned with the relations between employers acting through their management representatives and organized labour. He went further to add that collective bargaining is not only concerned with the negotiation of a formal labour agreement but also with the day to day dealings between management and the union. According to Salamon (2017) collective bargaining is a method of determining terms and conditions of employment, which utilizes the process of negotiation and agreement between representatives of management and employees. It provides a formal channel through which the differing interests of management and employees are resolved on a collective basis. This definition of Salamon captures collective bargaining as a method in which a representative of either the management or that of the employees collectively negotiates on labour terms and conditions at the same time resolve other issues bothering them in the organization.

In his own view, Adebile, and Ojo (2022) defines collective bargaining as a system based on self determination with the contracting parties voluntarily assuming responsibility for reaching on an agreement and honouring that agreement. This definition of Mulvey recognizes one of the basic features of collective bargaining which is voluntary interest. And this therefore implies that for collective bargaining to take place there must be voluntary agreement of both parties involved that is the employers and the employees of the organization before their disputes can be resolved. Eme and Ogbochie (2018) argued that collective bargaining is a voluntary negotiation between employers and workers of an organization with a view to regulating terms and conditions of employment through collective agreements. This definition recognizes the idea of voluntary interest of both parties before collective bargaining can take place in an organization. It is a process which presumes

a place for organizations in a process involving direct negotiations between those representatives of employees and management whose outcome seeks to constitute agreement on substantive matters relating to wages and salaries as well as terms and conditions of service. He concluded by saying that collective bargaining is the linchpin of pluralist industrial relations. This definition attempts to be more comprehensive as it captures the fact that collective bargaining becomes imperative in an organization when the matters relating to wages/salaries and other conditions of service becomes conflictual in the organization.

Ajayi (2017) also contend that collective bargaining is a term that symbolizes industrial democracy since employees in union and employers participate on the basis of equality in the determination of wages and the conditions of employment. This definition saw collective bargaining as the only technique of industrial dispute management which gives both the employees and the employers the right and freedom to negotiate on terms and conditions of labour and other welfare needs in the organization. Other scholars like Mamoria, (2019) has equally defined collective bargaining more broadly as a process of negotiation, joint decision-making, or joint regulation between groups who represent both employer and employee interests; and which implies the negotiation and continuous application of an agreed set of rules to govern the substantive and procedural terms of the employment relationship', i.e. went further to add that collective bargaining is distinct from consultation but joint problem-solving, in that it results into a formal bargained agreements or contracts to which both parties are obliged to adhere during an agreed upon period. From the foregoing, collective bargaining can be viewed as the most developed form of representative or collective voice, as it is typically carried out within a framework of rules, procedures, and rights set out in national and international law. It can involve the different stakeholders such as the state, trade unions, workers councils, employers, middle managers, and employees. However, the role played by each of these actors in the bargaining system varies considerably across countries, depending on the bargaining structure and rights accorded to them through the law and practice (Mamoria, 2019). Adebile, and Ojo (2022) posited that collective bargaining is the process whereby representatives of employers and employees jointly determine and regulate decisions pertaining to both substantive and procedural matters within the employment relationship. He further maintains that the outcome of this process is the collective agreement. And also that collective bargaining as one of the processes of industrial relations performs a variety of functions in work relations. It could be viewed as a means of industrial jurisprudence as well as a form of industrial democracy. It is a better means of resolving workplace conflict between labour and management as well as the determination of terms and conditions of employment. In an earlier opinion, Davey (2012) viewed collective bargaining as a continuing institutional relationship between an employer entity (government or private) and labour organization (union or association) representing exclusively a defined group of employees of said employer (appropriate bargaining unit) concerned with the negotiation, administration, and interpretation.

Mulvey (2023) observed that collective bargaining as machinery for discussion and negotiation, whether formal or informal between employer(s) and worker's representatives is aimed at reaching mutual agreement or understanding on the general employment relationship between employer(s) and workers. Collective bargaining describes the process whereby trade unions deal with employers to negotiate, administer and interpret agreement governing the conditions of employment. In the view of Finnemore, and Rensburg, (2020), collective bargaining is a process of decision making and its function has been recognized as a rule- making process. It also seeks to regulate economic behaviour in the labour market. Decisions are made through regular collective agreement which also serves as an effective method of industrial conflict resolutions. Collective bargaining serves as rule-making process because its central aim is to achieve a set of procedural rules or norms governing the terms of employment and conditions of service.

Adegun (2010) viewed collective bargaining as a form of job regulation with the representative of employers and employees jointly sharing the responsibility for the content of the rule and their observance thereof. According to him, any agreement resulting from collective bargaining process

is termed legally as collective agreement. This covers many issues affecting employees such as rates of wages, hours of work, holiday sick pay, overtime conditions, and employment of apprentices, redundancy and procedure for settlement of grievance. From the foregoing analysis, it can be understood that a lot of definitions have been offered on the concept of collective bargaining. However despite the differing views of the scholars, it is believable that all of their definitions point to the fact that collective bargaining is a better technique of industrial dispute management than others since it gives the employers and employees the freedom and ability to negotiate on terms and conditions of labour in the organization.

### **Nature and Characteristics of Collective Bargaining**

According to Finnemore, and Rensburg, (2020), collective bargaining by its nature can be described as negotiations about conditions and terms of employment between the employers and employees through their representatives with a view of reaching an agreement. It is a process which usually occurs either when an existing agreement terminates and the management-union relationship must be reviewed, or when conflicts of interest arise and existing agreements are rejected, or when the need for an agreement arises because of a dispute or grievance. From this understanding we can simply say that collective bargaining by its nature is a process since it involves interaction. And this interaction involves more than one person or group and these persons or groups have a common effect on one another because the behaviour of one person or group affects the behaviour of the other.

Furthermore, Chigudu (2015) distinguished an essential nature of collective bargaining from other techniques of industrial dispute management when he asserts that employees of an organization do not negotiate individually and on their own behalf, but do so collectively through representatives. This clearly shows that collective bargaining can exist and function only if; the employees themselves are prepared to identify a commonality of purpose, organize and act in concert and Management is prepared to recognize their organizations and accept a change in the employment relationship, which removes or at least constrains its ability to deal with employees on an individual basis. In fact the term "collective bargaining" as first used by Webbs, was seen as an economic association which had trade unionism acting as an interest group and controlled by entry into the trade. On the other hand, Chigudu (2015) argues that collective bargaining is a political process in the sense that the value of a union to its members is in its ability to protect their dignity and not economic achievement. Nevertheless, the Marxist scholars on their own have argued that collective bargaining is a means of social control within a trade and the class struggle between capital and labour.

Collective bargaining according to Finnemore, and Rensburg, (2020) is made up of the following characteristics:

**Collective Effort:** collective bargaining involves collective effort in the sense that all the workers collectively bargain for their collective interest. The reason for that is because left for different individuals workers, negotiation on terms and conditions of labour may be done arbitrarily which makes it difficult to obtain remedy for any perceived dissatisfaction. Therefore through collective effort, Workers and the management jointly arrive at an amicable solution through negotiations.

**Bargaining Power:** In collective bargaining, the bargaining strength of both the parties across the table is equal. That is why it is often referred to as industrial democracy at work. However collective bargaining only becomes democratic when both the parties are equipped with its knowledge and skills. At the same time, the strength of the union also depends on the demand and supply of workforce. Similarly how much capital is invested upon one worker also determines the ratio of bargaining power.



**Flexibility:** In collective bargaining both the parties should have flexible mental set up to arrive amicably at a common consensus. That is to say that collective bargaining does not require rigidity rather it provides on a platform where each party can amicably resolve their disputes.

**Voluntary Interest:** Both the parties involved in collective bargaining must willingly come in front of each other voluntarily in order to arrive at a voluntary agreement, which is mutually acceptable to both the parties. This implies that collective bargaining does not require the use of force before the parties involved can come together to resolve their disputes in an organization.

**Continuous Process:** Collective bargaining does not only commence with negotiation and ends in argument, but it's a continuous process that includes implementation of the agreement and also further negotiations.

**Dynamic Process:** collective bargaining is a dynamic process because it involves different stages that must be followed one after the other before an agreement is reached. During the negotiation process various issues which may change and be altered from time to time equally arises. The implementation process itself is also an ongoing issue. The reasoning ability of the parties involved keeps on changing. Various strategies used by both the parties keeps on changing based on the demand of the situation.

**Representation:** The Collective bargaining process must be represented by those who have the capacity to take decisions. That is why Finnemore, and Rensburg, (2020) posits that collective bargaining is the process whereby representatives of employers and employees jointly determine and regulate decisions pertaining to both substantive and procedural matters within the employment relationship

**Bipartite Process:** collective bargaining is a bipartite process since it usually takes place between the two parties (employer and the employees) in an organization. The employees and the employers negotiate on the issues affecting them directly across round table. And there is no third party intervention like pressure groups, litigation, and arbitration among others.

#### 4. Concept of Industrial Dispute

Dispute is seen as a persistent factor of any organizational life as the members go about their daily round of activities (Agba, 2017). Whenever people work together, there must be some degrees of dispute. This is because people will not always be in perfect agreement on all issues, goals, or perceptions. In fact dispute in a work environment is inevitable. However, the concept of industrial dispute has been viewed in various ways by different scholars in various perspectives as follows: According to Finnemore, and Rensburg, (2020) industrial dispute means the differences in the midst of employees and employers emanating from employment and/or non employment terms. This definition of Mamoria and Ganker captures industrial dispute as any differences that emanates mainly on employment terms. This implies that this kind of dispute is directly between employers and employees and not among the employees themselves. For instance, the industrial dispute between government and Nigerian Labour Congress over minimum wage and the dispute between government and the Nigerian Medical Association succinctly captures industrial dispute.

Corroborating the above view, Shuaib (2018) argued that the constant calls for upward review of National Minimum Wage Act even when employers are not complying with the existing ones shows that the Minimum Wage Act has always failed to address the problem it was designed to solve; hence, industrial disputes occurs. As Punch Newspaper (2024) reported, Nigerian workers recently threatened to embark on fresh strike following the refusal of the Federal Government to implement the new national minimum wage. In a similar way, Mulvey (2023) view industrial dispute as a total range of behavioural and attitudinal expression of opposition and divergent orientation between employees and employer. To them, industrial dispute arises in an organization from a perceived incompatibility of actions, goals and interests between the labour force and management leading to antagonistic relationship. Jaja, and Umezuruike, (2017) concurred that industrial dispute entails disagreements between employers of labour and employees over terms of employment. According to him these Industrial disputes are caused by certain factors which could be external and internal in the industrial relations system of an organization in question. To that effect, internal factors or causes of industrial dispute in an organization include management style, nature of workplace, promotion policies, and grievance procedures among others. On the other hand external factors according to Agba (2017) include economic policies, political change, economic depression, culture, and technological change.

Consequently, Jaja, and Umezuruike, (2017) argues that the external environmental factors pervade labour management relations. He further maintains that any attempt to focus on internal factors at the expense of external ones, will only provide a one sided view of the causes of disputes and would produce ideas that are generally found to be inadequate for organizations to relate effectively with their environment. To him communication could also pose a challenge to industrial harmony. Communication here entails the transfer of information, ideas, understanding, and feeling either vertically or horizontally within the organization and its environment. Poor communication between labour and management impedes peaceful relationship between employees and employers. Poor leadership style affects employees' intrinsic job satisfaction and could influence negatively on workers attitude to management. Therefore when workers are not satisfied with leadership style, dispute becomes inevitable. Appropriate leadership style is therefore a potent tool in ensuring harmonies of labour management relationship (Mulvey, 2023).

According to Jaja, and Umezuruike, (2017), industrial disputes could be defined as disagreement between two or more organizational members or groups arising from the fact that they must share scarce resources or work activities and/or from the fact that they have different status, goals, values or perceptions. This definition as offered by Stoner attempts to look at industrial dispute from the angle of employee versus employee misunderstanding. But in the contest of this study, our major concern is the type of disputes that normally take place between the employers and the employees which calls for collective bargaining. The nature of the transaction between managers and the managed which creates an enormous imbalance of economic power between the two classes, results in dispute situation. Suffice it to say that there are many sellers (workers) and relatively fewer buyers (employers) in the economy as the latter are dominant over the former in every sphere of the activities through their ownership of the means of production in an organization. In accordance to that, Jaja, and Umezuruike, (2017), contends that so long as parties concerned in industrial relations namely employers and employees inevitably have divergent interests and objectives there would be at least the potential chances for dispute in the organization. This has been so because it has been observed that industrial dispute is an inherent part and nature of organizational life and work relations are an inevitable source of disputes. From the same perspective, industrial disputes are power-based between the employer and the employed. Because of the power-balance between the two sides, the stronger party, which is usually the employer, chooses to use its power differential, or the threat of it to impose its policies on the weaker employee in the industrial relations process. It is because of this debate that the model of the unitarist is based on the assumption that industrial relations is essentially cooperation, purposive and harmony of interest between management and the managed and so must see dispute as alien and pathological to an organization and must be accepted by modern scholars of industrial relations.

From the foregoing, it can be understood that a lot of views has been submitted on the concept of industrial dispute by many scholars. However, in all these definitions, some salient points to be noted are that dispute is an inevitable phenomena or an inherent nature of organizations. Secondly that disputes usually occur between the management (employer) and the employees which usually demand for suitable resolution technique like collective bargaining to for its management.

## 5. Causes of Industrial Dispute

A lot of factors accounts for the causes of industrial dispute in different public organizations today some of which can be seen as follows:

**Salary/wages and Benefits:** salary/wages and fringe benefits have historically been known to be a key driver of industrial disputes in different organizational settings (Onyeonoru and Bankole 2016). The reason to account for that is because when the management of organizations were unable to pay their workers' salaries/wages as at when due dispute can occur. In the same vein when other entitlements due to the workers such as health allowances, accommodation allowances, transportation among others. Dispute is bound to occur in the organization.

**Delay or Denial of promotion:** Promotion in organizational setting refers to the progressive movement of a worker from a lower rank to a higher rank due to years of experience or expertise knowledge of the worker over others (Ezeali and Esiagu, 2009). Promotion is another cardinal issue that leads to industrial dispute in public organizations. The reason for that is because when the management of an organization refuses to promote or out rightly denies a particular worker or group of workers their promotion as at when due such worker or group of workers may decide to revote against it which results to dispute can occur.

**Layoffs:** Indiscriminate layoff of workers is also another factor that leads to industrial dispute in organizations. The reason for that is because it has been discovered that many management of organizations often layoff their workers at any slightest excuse without recourse to the terms and conditions of employment agreement. But in actual sense, the labour law and terms of agreement specifies the procedure for employment and procedure for the dissolution which should be referred to after several other disciplinary measures must have been applied on the erring worker (Nel, and Rooyen, 2021). That is to say that before layoff should be applied to any employee of an organization; due processes according to the labour law must be followed.

**Safety:** In the word of Adekeye (2013), as far as employment agreement is concerned employers of labour have the responsibility of ensuring that their workers are protected. They can do this by making provision for the health needs of their workers in the organization". Safety of workers is very important; however the inability to recognize it becomes a serious issue that brings about industrial dispute in public organizations. The reason for that is because, when the management of an organization fails to take the responsibility of protecting their employees from environmental hazards during their work hours the employees may decide to revote against the management which leads to dispute in the organizations.

**Work Hours:** work hours in an organization are another factor that often lead to industrial dispute. Adekeye (2013) maintains that disputes do arise in an organization when workers are required by the management to work extra hours than the one stated in their terms of agreement although it is more noticeable in private organizational settings. For instance, if the labour agreement states that the workers should come to work by 8:00 am in the morning and leave the place of work by 4:00 pm but due to nature of activities in the organization, the management may demand the workers to work overtime in most cases without extra wage/salary.

**Anti-Unionism:** Anti-union is also another factor that brings about industrial conflict in an organization. The reason for that is because if an organization is such type that the management does not allow workers to form a union among themselves or join other union so that they can collectively agitate for their demands whenever there is perceived dissatisfaction it can lead dispute. Jaja, and Umezuruike, (2017) noted that one of the reasons why some management of organizations does not allow their workers to join informal organization is the fear of losing control over them. That is to say workers in group can easily gain freedom to confront their employers whenever there is a breach of agreement between them.

**Leadership Styles:** leadership styles of management in an organization often lead to industrial dispute (Ama and Okafor, 2012). The reason for that is because there are different styles of leadership that can be applied by a management of a given organization which includes laissez-faire style, democratic style, and autocratic style among others. In view of that it has been discovered that autocratic style is the worst type of leadership and usually bring about dispute in different organizations. According to Nel, and Rooyen, (2021) autocratic style of leadership neither gives workers the chance to freely interact with the management nor give them the chance to freely bargain on the terms and conditions of labour agreement through dialogue. Workers in such an organization do not have the freedom to associate with one another and others too numerous to mention. Therefore when it gets to a point where workers of the organization can no longer endure this kind of style of leadership they can revote against it and that results to industrial dispute.

**Effects of Industrial Disputes on Performance of Public Organizations:** Dispute as is an inherent nature of an organization. Suffice it to say that no organization is immune or free from engaging in dispute. Dispute is inevitable in every organization because whenever people must work together, there must be some degrees of dispute (Adelibe and Ojo, 2012). The reason to account for that is because people especially in organizational contest will not always be in perfect agreement on all issues, goals, perceptions and even leadership styles among others. However no matter what the cause of the dispute may be, the most important thing to be considered is the procedure for its resolution so that it will not degenerate into other issues that could adversely affect the organization. The effects of dispute in public organization are as follows:

1. **Slow Pace of Functional Activities:** Dispute in public organization is noticed to have a serious negative effect on the functional activities of the organization. The reason is because during the period of Industrial dispute, both the management and the workers are not in good term as such they cannot come together to plan on how to carry out activities of the organization and to specify who should be responsible for carrying out what activity at a particular time. It is in recognition of this fact that Eteng, Agba, Ogaboh and Enang (2016) maintains that industrial dispute in an organization presents a situation of enmity, pointing of accusing finger on one another and a general less concern of both the management and the workers on activities of the organization.
2. **Unhealthy Rivalry between Management and Her Employees:**In the view of Adelibe and Ojo (2012), dispute in an organization presents an atmosphere of power parity between the management and the workers. During the period of dispute especially the one arising from breach of agreement, the workers appears to have been freed from the shackles of master-servant relationship with the management of the organization. Hence they are free to adopt any strategy to confront the management and make demand for their rights without considering any atom of loyalty.
3. **Reduction in the Productive Level of the Organization:** According to Jaja and Ratnam, (2022), when an organization spends much of its time dealing with disputes, members take much of their time away from focusing on the core goals of the organization which they are tasked with achieving. This implies that dispute causes to an organization a huge loss as it forces members to focus less on the project at hand in the organization and focus more on gossiping about dispute or venting about frustrations. As a result, organizations can lose money, donors and access to essential resources.
4. **Strike Actions:** Strike is a concerted and sustained refusal by work- men of an organization to perform some or all of the services for which they were hired (Ratnam, 2022). Strike action indicates a breakdown of cordial relation between employees and employers. Therefore whenever employees or workers of an organization discover that the management is not willing to fulfill the terms and conditions of their labour agreement, they may decide to embark on strike action which they see as the means through which the management may be forced to pay attention to their plight.
5. **Closure of the Organization:** Dispute in public organization brings about closure of the organization. The reasons for that is because when the management and the workers continuous to engage in dispute without seeking a means to resolve it, it can degenerate to a point where the organization may be closed.

## 6. Conditions Necessary for Collective Bargaining

For collective bargaining to take place in an organization, some necessary conditions must be recognized which can be seen as follows:

**Freedom of Association:** Ubeku in Ama and Okafor (2012) asserted that collective bargaining can only take place in an organization where freedom of association is guaranteed. On the other hand, in an organization where the management does not allow freedom of association it is always difficult to managed industrial dispute through collective bargaining. This therefore implies that, there will be no meaningful collective bargaining without the freedom of association accorded to both employers and workers.

**Trade Union Recognition:** For collective bargaining to take place in an organization there should be recognition of trade union in such organization (Jaja, and Umezuruike, 2017). Conversely, in an organization where the management is anti-union, it is not always easy to achieve industrial dispute through collective bargaining. Using the case of Minimum Wage conflict in Nigeria, Shuaib (2018) asserted that the government of Nigeria tends to be anti-union as there has been efforts at suppressing the Nigerian Labour Congress without due approach in negotiation. Such act hinders collective bargaining.

**Observance of Agreements:** According to Le (2020) collective bargaining thrives more favourably in a country where labour law system provides sanctions for breaches of agreements reached through the collective bargaining process. In that case, the labour administrative authorities may be easily consulted if the negotiation process fails to end the dispute between the employers and the employees of an organization. Thus the labour authorities may decide to impose any necessary sanction against the management of the organization in question.

**Good Faith:**Le (2020) maintains that Collective bargaining is workable only if the parties involved bargain in good faith. If not, there will be only process of bargaining without a result, that is an agreement. Good faith is more likely to be achieved where certain attitudes are shared among employers, workers and their organizations for a belief and faith in the value of compromise through dialogue, in the process of collective bargaining, and in the productive nature of the relationship collective bargaining requires and develops. Strong organizations of workers and employers contribute to bargaining in good faith, because there would be some parity in the bargaining strength of the two parties.

**Proper Internal Communication:** The Nigerian Labour Congress Policy Document (2008) states that for collective bargaining to take place in an organization both the management and union should keep their managers and members respectively well informed, as a lack of proper communication and information can lead to misunderstandings and even to strikes. Sometimes managers and supervisors who are ill-informed may inadvertently mislead workers who work under them about the current state of negotiations, the management's objectives and so on. In fact, it is necessary to involve managers in deciding on objectives and solutions, and such participation is likely to ensure greater acceptance - and therefore better implementation - by them.

## **Role of Collective Bargaining in Industrial Dispute Management in Public Organization**

Collective bargaining is the negotiation process that takes place between an employer and a group of employees when certain issues arise. The employees rely on a union member to represent them during the bargaining process, and the negotiations often relate to regulating such issues as working conditions, employee safety, training, wages, and layoffs among others. When an agreement is reached through a bargaining process, the resulting agreement becomes the contract governing employment issues in such organization (Le2020). Based on that, Collective bargaining is considered more advantageous over other techniques of industrial dispute in public organizations for so many reasons:

Firstly, collective bargaining has an advantage of dispute management through dialogue and consensus rather than through conflict and confrontation. According Le (2020) collective bargaining differs from arbitration where the solution is based on a decision of a third party while arrangements resulting from collective bargaining usually represent the choice or compromise of the parties themselves. Arbitration may displease one party because it usually involves a win/lose situation, and sometimes it may even displease both parties. Secondly, collective bargaining is a form of participation process and often brings about industrial democracy in an organization this is because it gives both parties (the management and the employees) chances to participate in deciding what proportion of the 'cake' is to be shared by the parties entitled to a share, to that effect, Le (2020) argue that collective bargaining is a form of participation process because it involves a sharing of rule-making power between employers and unions in areas which in earlier times were regarded as management prerogatives, for instance transfer, promotion, redundancy, discipline, modernization, production norms.

Furthermore, collective bargaining brings about social partnership towards which labour relations should strive in organizations. Social partnership in this context may be described as a partnership between organized employer institutions and organized labour institutions designed to maintain non- confrontational processes in the settlement of disputes which may arise between employers and employees. In the view of Falade (2010), collective bargaining unarguably contributes in building up a system of industrial jurisprudence by introducing civil rights in an organization. In other words, it ensures that management of an organization is guided by rules rather than by arbitrary decisions while dealing with their employees. The reason for that is because any attempt of the management to behave otherwise the collective agreement will be quickly called to mind. Of which they will be held responsible for such act of breach. More over collective bargaining has a valuable by-product relevant to the relationship between the two parties in an organization. It contributes towards mutual understanding by establishing a continuing relationship between the parties in dispute (Mamoria, 2019). The process, once the relationship of trust and understanding has been established, creates an attitude of attacking problems together rather than each other.

Unlike other techniques of dispute resolution, collective bargaining provides a flexible means for the adjustment of wages and employment conditions to economic and technological changes in an organization. And through this means the chances for disputes to occur in the organization are reduced. In view of that, countries with highly co-ordinated collective bargaining practices tend to have less inequality in wages, lower and less persistent unemployment and few and shorter strike actions than in countries where collective bargaining is less established

Salamon (2017) maintains that in societies where there is a multiplicity of unions and shifting union loyalties, collective bargaining and consequent agreements tend to stabilize union membership. For instance, where there is collective agreement employees are less likely to change union affiliations frequently. This is of value also to employers who are faced with constant changes in union membership and consequent inter-union rivalries resulting in more disputes in the workplace than otherwise.

Perhaps most important of all collective bargaining usually has the effect of improving industrial relations. This improvement can be at different levels. The continuing dialogue tends to improve relations at the workplace level between workers and the union on the one hand and the employer on the other. It also establishes a productive relationship between the union and the employers' organization where the latter is involved in the negotiation process. Adegun (2010) therefore maintained that collective bargaining influences the management of an organization by compelling managers to follow certain rules relating to personnel, to act reasonably when consulting with employees and prohibits managers from carrying out certain forms of discipline

## 7. Method

Descriptive survey design was adopted. The population for this study was 660 respondents comprised of staff sampled cross the campuses of the university. Purposive sampling technique was adopted. For the purpose of this study, the instrument used for data collection was structured questionnaire. The questionnaire instrument for the study was structured based on Rensis Likert's four (4) point scale. This enabled the respondents to respond to the questionnaire items/statements by ticking in either, Very High Extent (VHE) - 4 points, High Extent (HE) - 3 points, Low Extent (LE) - 2 points, or Very Low Extent (VLE) - 1 point boxes. Statistical tables, Mean and Standard Deviation were applied in data analysis.

$$\chi = \frac{\sum fx}{\sum n} = \frac{4+3+2+1}{4} = 2.5$$

Therefore, the decision rule therefore is 2.5. This means that a mean score of 2.5 and above is accepted while a mean score below 2.5 is rejected

## Data Analysis

### Research Objective 1: Mean responses to determine the extent to which negotiation has influenced conflict management in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki

S/N	ITEM	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	N	Mean
1	Negotiation has significantly influenced conflict management in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki	331	198	89	42	660	3.2
2	Negotiation promotes understanding of issues between staff and management in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki	271	232	63	94	660	3.0
3	Negotiation helps reduce incidence of strike actions in the university	274	201	106	79	660	3.0
4	Negotiation contributes to job satisfaction among staff of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki	222	239	118	81	660	2.9
5	Negotiation has influenced dedication to official duties and responsibilities among staff of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki	199	279	80	102	660	2.9



Source: Researchers' field survey, 2024.

Analysis in table 1 above shows the mean and standard deviation to determine the extent to which Negotiation has significantly influenced conflict resolution in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. From the table, it is observed that all the items were accepted with a grand mean of 3.0 representing a very high extent. Though majority of the respondents agreed to a high extent, the standard deviation which has a value of 1.00 shows that there is high degree of similarity in opinion among respondents. From the table, item 1 to 5 had individual mean of 3.2, 3.0, 3.0, 2.9 and 2.9 respectively and as such were accepted

**Research Objective 2: Mean responses to ascertain the extent to which mediation has influenced conflict management in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki**

S/N	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	N	Mean
1	Mediation helps understand Management position on issues of conflict in the institution	290	198	90	82	660	3.1
2	Mediation reduces the level of indiscipline among staff of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki	241	230	100	89	660	2.9
3	Mediation scheme reduces the tendency to disrupt academic calendar in the university	205	281	99	75	660	2.9
4	Mediation has influenced the level of contentment among staff of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki	301	220	89	50	660	3.2
5	Negotiation has influenced amicable resolution of disputes in the organisation	322	251	52	35	660	3.3

Source: Researchers' field survey, 2024.

Analysis in table 2 above shows the mean responses to ascertain the extent to which mediation has influenced management of conflict in Ebonyi State University. From the table, all the 5 items had a grand mean of 3.08 and grand standard deviation of 0.96. Consequently, all the 5 items were accepted as they had individual mean above 2.5. Item 1 had a mean of 3.1, item 2 had a mean of 2.9, item 3 had a mean of 2.9, item 4 had a mean of 3.2, and item 5 had a mean of 3.3. Consequently, it was concluded that mediation has influenced management of conflict in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki

**Research Objective 3: Mean response to determine the extent to which conciliation has reduced industrial unrest among staff of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki**

S/N	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	N	Mean
1	Conciliation has reduced industrial unrest among staff of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki	249	212	109	90	660	2.9
2	Conciliation promotes understanding of issues and facts in dispute between workers and management in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki	300	199	73	88	660	3.1
3	Conciliation promotes amicable resolution of disputes between workers and management in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki	307	230	58	65	660	3.2

4	Conciliation promotes acceptance of resolutions between workers and management in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki	198	277	67	118	660	2.8
5	Conciliation has enabled timely de-escalation of misunderstanding among management and staff of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki	227	286	42	106	660	3.0

Source: Researchers' field survey, 2024.

Analysis in table 3 above shows the mean response to determine the extent to which conciliation has reduced industrial unrest among staff of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. The analysis shows that all the 5 items were accepted with a grand mean of 3.0 and grand standard deviation of 0.96. From item 1, Conciliation has reduces industrial unrest among staff of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki with a mean score of 2.9 while item 2 had a mean score of 3.1, item 3 had a mean score of 3.2, item 4 had a mean score of 2.8 while item 5 had a mean score of 3.0. Consequently, conciliation has reduced industrial unrest among staff of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.

## 8. Summary of Findings

In the course of our investigation, the following findings as summarized were made:

1. Negotiation has significantly influenced resolution of conflict in Ebonyi State University. Negotiation promotes understanding of issues between staff and management in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. Negotiation helps reduce incidence of strike actions in the University.
2. Mediation has significantly influenced management of conflict in Ebonyi State University. Mediation reduces the level of indiscipline. Mediation scheme reduces the tendency to disrupt academic calendar in the university.
3. Conciliation has reduced industrial unrest among staff of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. Conciliation promotes amicable resolution of disputes between workers and management, promotes acceptance of resolutions between workers and management and enabled timely de-escalation of misunderstanding among management and non-academic staff of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.

## Conclusion

The study concluded that negotiation has significantly influenced resolution of conflict. Negotiation promotes understanding of issues between staff and management in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. Negotiation helps reduce incidence of strike actions in the university. Mediation has significantly influenced management of conflict in Ebonyi State University. Mediation reduces the level of indiscipline. Mediation scheme reduces the tendency to disrupt academic calendar in the university. Conciliation has reduced industrial unrest among non-academic staff of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. Conciliation promotes amicable resolution of disputes between workers and management, promotes acceptance of resolutions between workers and management and enabled timely de-escalation of misunderstanding among management and staff of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.

## Recommendations

Arising from the findings, the following recommendations were therefore made:

1. There is need for government and management of Ebonyi State University to always engage in negotiation in order to ensure job commitment among staff of the organization. Negotiation will produce a sense of social security, motivates workers to work hard in order to achieve the peak of their career before retirement, contribute to job satisfaction and influence dedication to official duties and responsibilities among non-academic staff of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.
2. There is need for government and management of Ebonyi State University to always engage in mediation in order to ensure efficient job performance of staff of the organisation. Mediation would reduce the level of indiscipline, influence the achievement of optimal results with minimal cost and reduce the tendency to acquire illicit wealth among non-academic staff of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.
3. There is need for government and management of Ebonyi State University to always engage in conciliation in order to reduce industrial unrest among staff of Ebonyi State University. Conciliation would promote amicable resolution of disputes between workers and management, promote acceptance of resolutions between workers and management and enabled timely de-escalation of misunderstanding among management and staff of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.

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