

Occupational Stressor: Deprivation of Workers' Bargaining Power among Casualised Workers

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Abstract: ***Introduction:** The term casualization has been loosely used in some circles to infer a model of employment. However, in some climes, it is used to describe a precarious work arrangement characterized by bad work conditions, job insecurity, low wage and lack of employment benefit, deprivation of right to organize and collectively bargain. **Objective:** This study examined casualization and the ensuing effects from deprivation of Workers' Bargaining Power in the oil and gas industry. **Methodology:** A cross sectional survey of workers who had been casual workers before assuming permanent roles. An open-ended questionnaire was used for the collection of primary data. Out of 250 (Two hundred and fifty) administered copies, 210 (Two hundred and ten) copies were dully filled and returned. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics which includes percentages, mean and frequency tables for the research questions. Three hypotheses were analysed by multiple regression of Best Linear Unbiased Estimator (BLUE) of ordinary least square (OLS) statistical method and tested at 0.05 level of significance. **Result and Discussion:** It revealed that casualization has significant negative effects on workers bargaining power. **Recommendation:** It is recommended that governments should be pragmatic in the implementation of national and international Labour Laws especially anti casualization clauses. Multinational oil firms have the capacity under the existing Labour Law to put an end to casualization but are simply taking advantage of the flaws in the labour laws. Employers should ensure casual workers are allowed the right to join labour union and follow due process in terminating casual workers.*

Keywords: Casualization, Bargaining Power, Oil and gas industry

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Over the years, the Nigeria government has sought means of reducing the level of unemployment. Unfortunately, the more the government tends to reduce the growing level of unemployment, the more other forms of employment vices tend to negate this interest. One of these vices is the casualization of workers, especially in the key sectors of the Nigerian economy such as the oil and gas, telecommunication and banking & allied financial sectors. Thus, instead of increasing the level of employment in these key sectors, organizations seek to reduce the level of regular employed permanent workers in order to increase the level casual workers, thereby creating underemployment and over exploitation of the employees [1].

Though, international and Nigeria labour laws are against casualization of workers, enforcement seem incapacitated. The labour union of Nigeria has equally not been able to significantly reduce this practice of casualization. Thus, many workers found themselves in this category of underemployment as there are no other options [1 - 2]. Furthermore, even the permanent regular employed workers are not secured. The oil and gas companies are mostly owned by foreign investors and are neck deep in the practice with the selfish interest of maximizing profit through exploitation of workers. Casual workers are often treated differently, especially in terms of power to negotiate or bargain contractual work agreement, welfare packages, retirement benefits, transportation allowances, medical, leave allowance among others. This portend significant

source of occupational stress to affected workers and family. Casual workers are not allowed to embark on industrial action to push forward for better remuneration and other better reward packages. Thus, casual workers are muted and unable to bargain their contractual work agreement. In some cases, casual workers are made to sign the contractual work agreement without been given a copy of the contractual agreement.

One of the ugly facets of casualization is the deprivation of bargaining power in work relations. Bargaining power is the rights and privileges of the parties in work contractual relations to determine the suitable terms and conditions which suits involved parties [3]. It gives way to negotiation or haggling in which the buyer and seller of a good or service debate the price and exact nature of a transaction for the purpose of accepting mutually the terms of exchange [4]. Bargaining is seen as the alternative pricing strategy to fixed prices and allows the seller to sell to different customers or buyer at a different price of the same product quality and size [5]. This depends strongly on the bargaining power of the buyer or the seller and gives room to create an atmosphere where each party will be comfortable with the relations. Deprivation of the workers right to negotiate puts the workers at disadvantage and unhappy situation thus causing psychosocial stress. Unfortunately, this could lead to low productivity of workers and the organizations. The concept of the bargaining power is the relative power of buyers and the sellers' parties in a situation to exert influence over each other on the bargaining [6]. If both parties are on an equal status or standard in a haggling or bargaining, then it lead to equal bargaining power, which is an instance of a perfectly competitive

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market, or between an evenly matched monopoly and monopsony [7]. In this study, bargaining power is monopolized such that the buyers (the Oil and Gas Companies) determine what the condition and terms of services while the seller (casual laborer's) become a price taker in the transaction. Thus, the casual labourers has no say, no voice and accepts all the conditions and terms of contract because the casual labourer lacks bargaining power. Casualization has made it difficult for workers to express their views and bargain for better terms and conditions for their employment contract. This is perceived to have created unhappiness in workplaces, workers' poor condition of work, overexploitation, lack of voice, deprivation of negotiation rights especially during downsizing exercises, lack of assurance of contract renewal, lack of right of joining labour union, lack of assurance of being converted to permanent staff and lack of power to sue the employers' on condition of service [8]

Casual workers in the oil and gas industry of Nigeria are deprived of bargaining power in the packaging of their contracts and has gone beyond what they could change alone. This is because the apex oil and gas organization are equally engaged in casualization [9]. Adequate research has not been carried out in this aspect. Some of the few researches carried out in this regard were in developed countries. This creates a significant research gap; hence this study is focused on investigation the casualization and its associated deprivation of bargaining power.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The objective of this study is to examine the casualization and its effects on workers' bargaining power in the oil and gas industry of Nigeria.

1.4 Statement of Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were developed in accordance to the research objectives and to test the significance at 5% level:

Hypothesis I

Ho: There is no significant influence of casualization on workers' bargaining power

H₁: There is significant influence of casualization on workers' bargaining power

Hypothesis II

Ho: There is no significant influence of non-unionization of workers on bargaining power.

H₁: There is significant influence of non-unionization of workers on bargaining power.

Hypothesis III

H₀: The power of the employer to terminate casual workers' job at any time without prior notice has no significant influence on casual workers' bargaining power.

H₁: The power of the employer to terminate casual workers' job at any time without prior notice has significant influence on casual workers' bargaining power.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The increasing level of casualization and the effect on workers' power of employment contract negotiation is a worthwhile study at this time of increasing economic hardship in most developing economies. This study will provide the necessary knowledge and impetus needed to mitigate the menace of casualization. Oil companies will understand the underpinning distaste for the practice and how improving workers' contract could improve organizational productivity. The study will be useful to other researchers who might carry out related studies in future as the findings from this study will be useful materials for literature review.

2. Methodology

2.1 Study Design

Cross sectional survey of contract and casual staff in a multinational oil and gas company

2.2 Study Population

The study population is made up of contract and casual workers of a multinational oil and gas company in Eket, Nigeria. It has over 2,045 (two thousand and forty-five) of which a sample of 250 (two hundred and fifty) participants were selected using convenient sampling technique.

2.3 Data Collection

The instrument for data collection was an open-ended questionnaire with 5-point Likert's scale question format. Questionnaire, participant information, and consent form was sent to participant for consent and self-administration. Options on the five-point Likert scale were assigned Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Undecided (UK); Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with assigned weight of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. Face and content validity of questionnaire was undertaken by industry and academic reviewers to ensure questionnaire was suitable, understandable, simple and well-structured. Furthermore, reliability test was conducted using test-retest method to determine the coefficient of the reliability using Cronbach Alpha (α) statistical method. The result shows a Cronbach Alpha (α) of 0.791 which is greater than 0.7, hence the instrument was accepted to be reliable and was used for this study. From the 250 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 210 copies of were duly filled and returned were used for the analysis. The mean percentage descriptive statistics was used to analyse the research questions while multiple regression of ordinary least square (OLS) statistical method were used for the analysis of the hypotheses. The result of the analysis of the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

The underpinning theories of this study are the Dependence Theory of Bargaining Power And Social Exchange Theory.

Dependence Theory of Bargaining Power

The dependency theory of bargaining power was developed by Bacharach and Lawler [10]. The theory states that power is a central feature of bargaining and negotiation. It regards "bargaining" as a process of managing impressions and manipulating information. This theory has stood as a provocative and comprehensive theory of power in bargaining and negotiation. The basic assumptions of the dependency theory are given as follows:

- 1) Power is the Essence of Bargaining. This is regarded as the pivotal construct of bargaining. It regards power as the central organizing device of a bargainer's reality and multidimensional; an outcome and a potential.
- 2) Bargaining is a process of tactical action. This was shown that tactical action links potential power and bargaining outcome.
- 3) Bargaining power is a subjective power. This reveals that power in negotiation does not exist apart from bargainers' perceptions of it (within the bargaining situation and relationship).
 - a) Power has an objective component (e.g., money, status, knowledge, reward). The subjective component (bargainers' power perceptions and judgments), though, is more important to understanding potential power and tactical action.
 - b) Objective power influences bargaining through the actual interaction of the negotiators.
 - c) Manipulating perceptions of power is a critical bargaining tactic.

Dependence in the theory, generally means the degree to which the parties have a stake in the bargaining relationship. The dependence relationship is not constant or fixed. Negotiators bargain about the nature of their dependence on one another.

Dimensions of dependence include:

- a) Alternatives - The extent to which parties have alternatives via which they can gain similar outcomes.
 - b) Commitment - The extent to which a party is committed to outcomes the other bargaining party controls.
- 4) Bargaining power reflects (in bargaining between Party A and Party B):
 - a) A's alternatives to dealing with B.
 - b) B's alternatives to dealing with A.
 - c) A's commitment to outcomes B controls.
 - d) B's commitment to outcomes A controls.
 - 5) Bargaining power is determined by the parties' comparative dependence.
 - a) The greater A's alternatives, the less B's power over A.
 - b) The fewer A's alternatives, the greater B's power over A.
 - c) The greater A's commitment to outcomes B controls, the greater B's power over A.
 - d) The less A's commitment to outcomes B controls, the less B's power over A.
 - 6) Power is influenced by manipulating perceptions of alternatives and commitment.

- 7) Persuasive argument is a primary way of manipulating perceptions of alternatives and commitment.

Bacharach and Lawler pointed out three forms of bargaining power in a work relation:

- 1) *Absolute power* – which is defined as the power of an individual irrespective of the other party's power. That is A's absolute power is determined by B's alternatives and commitment.
- 2) *Relative power* - the dependence of one party compared to the dependence of the other party. The ratio of A's dependence on B to B's dependence on A.
- 3) *Total power* - the sum of the parties' dependence upon one another.

This theory is relevant to this study as it provides clear understanding of power of each party in a work relation is determined by the degree of dependency on each other. That is if party A depends on the party B more than the party B depends on A, the bargaining power of B will be higher than party A and vice versa. Thus application to the case of the casual workers bargaining power, it helps to understand that the bargaining power of casual workers is much less than the bargaining power of the oil and gas companies, this is because the casual workers need the job seriously more than the Oil Companies' need their services. This clearly means that casual workers would need the government and organized labour unions' intervention to get a better working terms and conditions.

Social Exchange Theory

The Social exchange theory views exchange as a social behaviour that may result in both economic and social outcomes. Homans defined social exchange as the exchange of activity, tangible or intangible, and rewarding or costly, between at least two people. It has been generally analyzed by comparing human interactions with the marketplace. The study of the theory from the microeconomic perspective is attributed to Blau [11]. Under his perspective every individual is trying to maximize his wins. Blau stated that once this concept is understood, it is possible to observe social exchanges everywhere, not only in market relations, but also in other social relations like friendship [11]. Social exchange process brings satisfaction when people receive fair returns for their services [11]. This theory of social exchange is relevant to this study because it shows individual exchanges what he or she has for the purpose of getting equal or more returns for the exchange which is not only tangible such as money and goods but also non-tangible benefits, such as security of work, conducive work environment, safety, respect among others. This clearly shows that the casual workers would not only need to be paid well, but should have better working condition, work security among other benefits.

3. Results

Out of 250 copies of the questionnaires distributed, 210 copies were duly filled and returned for analysis. This implies 84% response rate with 40 voided for incompleteness.

Table 1: Analysis of the responses to the Questionnaire items on research questions on Casualization of Workers (Independent variable)

S/N	Variables	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Total
1	Deprivation of bargaining power could cause the feeling of job insecurity for casual workers	91	64	3	31	21	210
2	Non unionization of casual workers adversely affects workers bargaining power.	82	72	2	42	12	210
3	Casualization could cause deprivation of bargaining power.	62	88	3	46	11	210
	SUM	235	224	8	119	44	630
	Mean (X)	78 37%	74 35%	3 2%	40 19%	15 7%	210 100%

Source: Field Survey, 2020.

Table 2: Analysis of the responses to the Questionnaire items on dimensions of Workers’ bargaining power (Dependent variable)

S/N	Variables	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Total
1	Casualization deprives power to influence equitable reward for work skills/functions.	102	72	1	23	12	210
2	Casualization deprives power to influence employer’s acceptance to provide equitable working condition.	112	64	2	21	11	210
3	Casualization deprives power to influence guaranteed work security/assurance Power to influence guaranteed work security/assurance	89	83	3	24	11	210
	SUM	303	219	6	68	34	630
	Mean (X)	101 48%	73 35%	2 1%	23 11%	11 5%	210

Source: Field Survey, 2020.

Table 2 above shows that an average of 101 participants, which represents 48% of the total participants strongly agreed, 73 participants which represent 35% agreed, 2 participants representing 1% were undecided, 23 participants representing 11% disagreed while 11 representing 5% of the total participants strongly disagreed that dimensions of Workers’ bargaining power such as: Power to influence equitable reward for work skills/functions; Power to influence employer’s acceptance to provide equitable working condition; and Power to influence guaranteed work security/assurance (Dependent variable) can enhance the casual workers’ bargaining power, but unfortunately the casual workers do not have such powers.

3.1 Test of Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3.

Hypothesis I

Ho: There is no significant influence of casualization on workers’ bargaining power

H₁: There is significant influence of casualization on workers’ bargaining power

Hypothesis II

Ho: There is no significant influence of non-unionization of workers on bargaining power.

H₁: There is significant influence of non-unionization of workers on bargaining power.

Hypothesis III

H₀: The power of the employer to terminate casual workers’ job at any time without prior notice has no significant influence on casual workers’ bargaining power.

Table 1 above indicate that an average of 37 participants, representing 37% of the total participants strongly agreed, 74 participants which represents 35% agreed, 3 participants representing 2% were undecided, 40 participants representing 19% disagreed while 15 representing 7% of the total participants strongly disagreed that casualization has adverse effect on casual workers’ bargaining power. Since 72% representing those who are supporting (SA = 37% + A= 35%) is more than those who are against representing 26% (D=19% + SD = 7%), it implies that casualization has adverse effect on casual workers’ bargaining power.

H₁: The power of the employer to terminate casual workers’ job at any time without prior notice has significant influence on casual workers’ bargaining power.

The component variables for the Independent variable (X)

- X₁ = Effect of casualization on workers bargaining power
- X₂ = Non unionization of workers
- X₃= The power of the employer to terminate casual workers’ job at any time without prior notice on casual workers.

The measuring variables for the Dependent variable (Y)

- y₁ = Power to influence equitable reward for work skills/functions;
- y₂ = Power to influence employer’s acceptance to provide equitable working condition;
- y₃ = Power to influence guaranteed work security/assurance;

Table 3: Result of the Multiple Regression of “Workers’ Bargaining Power” on “Casualization of workers”

Independent Variables	Coefficient	Standard Error	T-statistic	P-value
(Constant)	7.112	0.276	9.011	0.000**
X ₁	-0.712	0.0378	3.331	0.001**
X ₂	-0.668	0.066	3.845	0.000**
X ₃	-0.587	0.051	1.765	0.011*

R – Squared = 0.662; Adjusted R-Squared: =0.641; Prob (F – statistic) = 0.000

Source: Author’s Computation

$$Y_1 = a_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + \mu_i \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

Where:

a_0 = Part of workers' bargaining power which does not depend on casualization of workers.

b_1 to b_3 = The rate of change of "workers' bargaining power with respect to a unit change in any of the independent variables X_1 , X_2 , and X_3 ..

μ = The stochastic variable or error term.

$$Y = 7.112 - 0.712X_1 - 0.668X_2 - 0.587 X_3 \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

The above equation and Table 3 shown above revealed a constant value of 3.464 which showed the level of the workers' bargaining power in the organization if all the explanatory variables (casualization) (x_1 to x_3) are held constant. The model also shows that the b_1 to b_3 for $X_1 - X_3$ are all negative, that is the variables of Casualization of workers such as: Influence of lack of assurance of workers' employment in casualization; Non unionization of casual workers to join labour union in casualization; and the power of the employer to terminate casual workers' job at any time without prior notice have negative effect on workers' bargaining power. Since each of the *p-values* have at least one star (*), it implies that the null hypotheses are rejected and accept the alternative hypothesis that casualization of workers has significant negative effects on the casual workers' bargaining power in this organization.

4. Discussion

In hypothesis one, the result shows that the regression coefficient (b_1) is -0.712. This implies that lack of assurance of workers' employment in casualization has significant negative effect on workers' bargaining power in the organization and it shows that an increase in casualization of workers by 10% will decrease the bargaining power of casual workers while the reduction of casualization by 10% will increase the bargaining power of the casual workers by 7.12%. Generally, the model shows that the coefficient of determination (r^2) is 0.662 which implies that increase in casualization of workers can explain 66.2% of the changes in the casual workers' bargaining power in the organization. This shows a good fit for the regression model which can predict what happens to the bargaining power of casual workers when the casualization changes. This finding in hypothesis one supports the work of Bamidele, Modupe,

Femi, and Rasaanq.,(2019) who examined the Casual Work Arrangements (CWAs) and Its Effect on Right to Freedom of Association in Nigeria and found that lack of the rights of the casual workers' of association with organized Labour affect their work assurance and bargaining power for better condition of work. In hypothesis two, the regression coefficient (b_2) is -0.668. This implies that non-allowance of casual workers to join labour union in casualization has significant negative effects on workers' bargaining power for better terms and conditions of work in the organization. It also revealed that increase in work casualization by 10% will reduce the bargaining power of workers by 6.68%. This finding supports the work of Okafor and Rasak who carried out a study on Casual Employment [3]. 'A Nostrum to Unemployment in Nigeria' and found that non-allowance of casual workers right to join labour union and other forms of unionism deprive the casual rights to freedom and adversely affect their power to negotiation for better work condition. The finding of this hypothesis two is also supported by the work of Bamidele, Modupe, Femi, and Rasaanq who examined the Casual Work Arrangements (CWAs) and Its Effect on Right to Freedom of Association in Nigeria and found that lack of the rights of the casual workers' of association affects their power to push for better conditions terms and conditions of work [2].

In hypothesis three, the regression coefficient (b_3) is -0.587. This reveals that the power of the employer to terminate casual workers' job at any time without prior notice has significant negative influence on casual workers' bargaining power. This implies that when employers' power to terminate casual workers' job at any time without prior notice is increased by 10%, the bargaining power of the casual workers will decrease by 5.87% in the organization. This finding supports the work of Fapohunda who carried out a study on employment casualization and degradation of work in Nigeria [12 - 14]. The finding shows that the level of degradation of the casual workers is very high such that the employers could terminate the casual workers appointment without any prior notice.

The structure of the conceptual model for this study is given below in Figure 1.

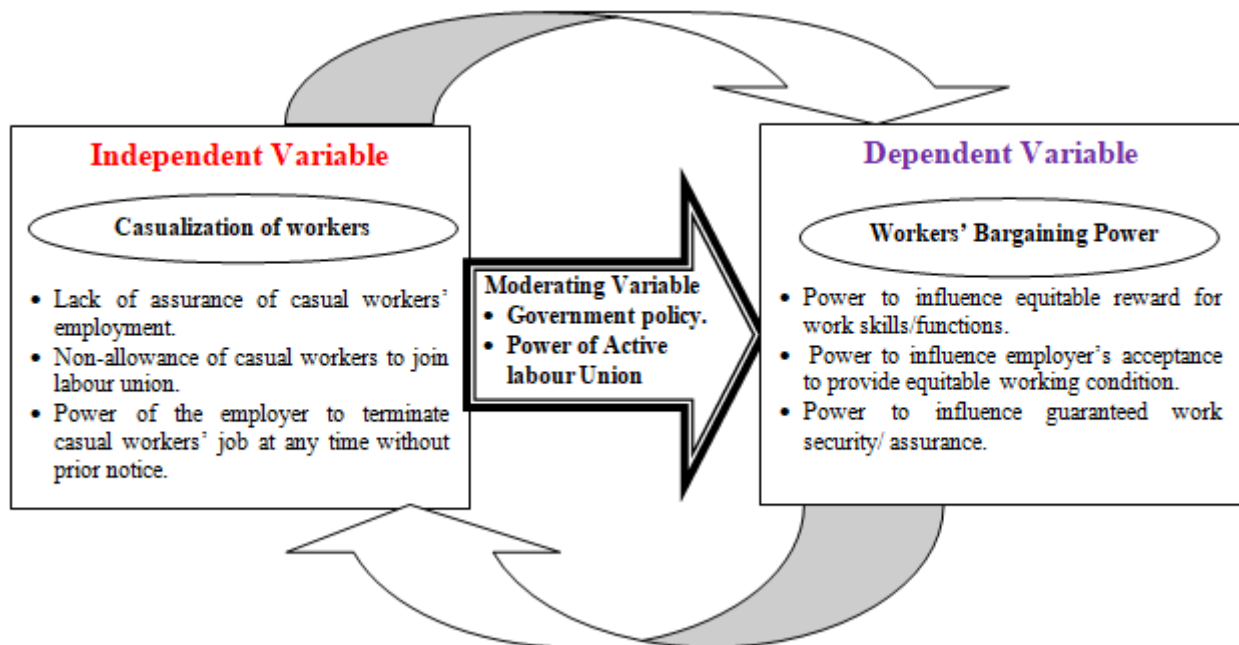


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Source: Author generated

Figure 2.1 above shows the conceptual model of the relationship between Casualization of workers and the Bargaining power of the workers. It shows the directional flow of what happens when there is a change in the casualization of workers on the ability of the workers to bargain for better terms and conditions of their work relations with the employers in the organization. The two big directional arrows show the circular flow of the relationship. That is where there is a change in casualization it causes the bargaining power to improve or fall, this in a feedback system will determine what will be the strength of the casualization in the next period and the cycle continues [15 – 18]. The components of the independent variable (Worker's casualization) include lack of assurance of job security for casual workers; non-allowance of casual workers to join labour union; and power of the employer to terminate casual workers' job at any time without prior notice. Any of the components could affect the dependent variable (Workers' bargaining Power). The components include power to influence equitable reward for work skills/functions; power to influence employer's acceptance to provide equitable working condition; and power to influence guaranteed work security and assurance. The level of the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable is moderated by the moderating components which are Government policy; and Power of active labour union moderates the level of effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable [19-20]. Also, the active labour effectiveness tends to moderate casualization and its effect on casual workers' bargaining power. The strength of this studies lies in the underpinning theoretical framework, high response rate of 84%, rigorous literature inclusion and appreciable number of respondents. The weakness however lies in the scarcity of literatures dealing on casualization in the oil and gas industry. Further work would be required to explore how bargaining and negotiation could affect contract packages.

5. Conclusion

This study has shown that casualization in the oil and gas industry in Nigeria has been on the increase for years. The percentage of casual workers and contract staff has more than double the size of the permanent staff in most of the oil and gas companies in Nigeria. It has also shown that most of the oil and gas companies are intentional reducing the permanent staff for casual workers and contract staff in order to earn abnormal profit at the expense of the casual workers. From the analysis of the data collected it shows that casualization of worker has significant negative effects on the bargaining power of the casual workers to negotiate better terms and condition of the employment. It revealed that lack of assurance of workers' employment, non-allowance of casual workers to join labour union and the power of the employer to terminate casual workers' job at any time without prior notice to the casual workers significantly affect casual workers' bargaining power adversely.

From the results of the analysis, it could be concluded that if the casualization of the workers could significantly reduced by the oil and gas companies, the casual workers' bargaining power for better terms and condition of work will be improved and the level of productivity of the casual workers and overall productivity of the organization will be improved. However, the task is on the Nigerian government and the active organized labour unions to join efforts in eradicating this act of casualization for better terms and conditions of work.

It is therefore recommended that government should enforce labour laws especially as it affects practice of casualization allowing unionization, involvement of casual and contract workers in contract negotiation. Employers should ensure casual workers are assured of their work and officially documented in the contractual employment agreement in order to improve their bargaining power on the term and

conditions of their casual work. This will help to reduce workers' unhappiness and fear that will affect their performance and overall performance of the organization. Organizations' should ensure that casual workers are encouraged by allowing casual workers to join labour union in order to give them a representative voice in collective bargaining for better terms and conditions of the work. This will give them protection of their collective interest to improve their terms and conditions of their work. Organizations should ensure that it follows the due process of disengaging or terminating casual workers' employment. At least there should be a query, warning and final termination. Furthermore, there should be some forms of compensation for the casual worker to survive for a while before getting another job.

6. Consent and Ethical Approval

This study was approved by the research advisory Committee of the Department of Sociology at the Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria. Informed consent was obtained from participant after participant information was given.

7. Competing Interests

Authors declares that there was no competing interest in undertaking this study.

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