

PRESSURE GROUP POLITICS IN NIGERIA: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE NIGERIAN LABOUR CONGRESS, 2000-2014

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Abstract

This paper presents a study of pressure group politics in Nigeria with a focus on the activities of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) in the past eleven years. While the main objective is to critically examine the dynamics of pressure group politics in Nigeria with a view to assessing their political and socio-economic implications, to corporate existence of Nigeria in an attempt to allocate cherished values in an equitable and justifiable manner, the study has as its specific objectives, to ascertain if the activities of the Nigeria Labour Congress have led to increased wages/salaries, working conditions and standard of living of the Nigerian worker; to determine the extent to which activities of the Nigeria Labour Congress have enhanced reduction in level of unemployment in the country; and to evaluate the impact of NLC on the socio-economic and political processes in Nigeria as a nation. Flowing from the objectives outlined above, the study attempts to provide answers to a number of research questions such as in terms of wages/salaries and standard of living of the workers, has the level of success of the NLC been relatively high in the period under review. Have the activities of the congress facilitated reduction in the level of unemployment in the country, within the study period? Finally, the study will also want to know if the organizations activities have had a significant impact on the socio-economic and political process of Nigeria as a nation in the period under investigation. Using an in-depth interview guide (IGI), responses from ten labour leaders spread across four Eastern states were analyzed and interpreted in a content analytic approach to yield a number of findings and recommendations which include: the urgent need to compel the Federal Government to institute welfare packages for the old and unemployed in the society and establish oil refineries in the Niger Delta areas to reduce unemployment. Its cardinal recommendations include among others, that jumbo wage of legislators must be checkmated while the war against corruption should be intensified. Finally,

real power, so as to succumb to their whims and caprices, through pressure and persuasions. Judging from the various professional callings in the society, many self-serving interest or pressure groups attempt severally to pursue their parochial interests. A critical look at the dynamics of pressure groups in Nigeria agrees with the classification of interest/pressure groups into two typologies. This classification is based on the degree of professionalism and organizational structures which are inherent in such professions. To this end, pressure groups may be classified as – the classified and structured pressure groups in which membership is restricted to individuals who share common group consciousness, ideology, professional or social callings. To belong, one must visibly subscribe to group norms and values. Examples include the Nigerian Medical Association, Nigeria Union of Teachers, the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) etc; the unclassified and unstructured pressure groups – Examples include the Manufacturers' Association of Nigeria (MAN), Academic Staff Union of Nigeria Universities (ASUU), the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), National Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA) etc. In this group, the professional or class polarity does not matter but the ability and willingness to identify with the collective aspiration of the recognized body, and the subjugation of individual preferences to the collective will.

The loci of this study revolve around the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) in the New Millennium. The body is a highly unstructured group in the sense that it is an amalgam of interest groups from all the nooks and crannies of industrial and labour institutions in the country with a legal framework and professional focus based on the welfare of workers, employment problems, job security, conditions of work, shifts, holidays, remuneration, methods of wage payment, wage-fixing, labour and employer grievances and disputes, levels of production and efficiency, safety, health and welfare at work, social security and old age benefits, maternity leave, employment, etc.

As we attempt a cursory examination of the working mechanisms of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) this paper will from time-to-time, allude to other interest groups whose actions or omissions could re-enforce the capabilities of the congress especially in the face of the global economic and financial melt-down, rising unemployment, leadership crises, poor infrastructural development, exploitative remuneration and labour abuse, and the de-industrialization of Nigeria. In spite of its daunting obstacles, the NLC has in all, attempted severally to advocate a better deal for Nigerian

unionized by the NLC. Against this background, this study intends to deal with the following research questions:

1. In terms of wages/salaries and standard of living of workers, has the level of success of the NLC been relatively high in the period under review?
2. Have the activities of the Nigeria Labour Congress facilitated a reduction in the level of unemployment in the country, within the study period?
3. Have the organization's activities had a significant impact on the socio-economic and political process of Nigeria as a nation in the new millennium?

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to critically examine the dynamics of pressure group politics in Nigeria with a view to assessing their political and socio-economic implications, to corporate existence of Nigeria in an attempt to allocate cherished values in an equitable and justifiable manner. The specific objectives include:

- (i) To ascertain if the activities of the Nigeria Labour Congress have led to increased wages/salaries, working conditions and standard of living of the Nigerian worker.
- (ii) To determine the extent to which activities of the Nigeria Labour Congress have enhanced reduction in level of unemployment in the country.
- (iii) To evaluate the impact of NLC on the socio-economic and political processes in Nigeria as a nation.

Significance of the study

Previous studies on pressure groups have failed to critically examine and analyze the inherent roles, performance and objectives of the Nigeria Labour Congress in the New Millennium (Ananoba, 1969; Bangura, 1987; Esua, 1964). The present study aims at filling this lacuna. Consequently, the study will be of immense benefit to the entire labour/interest groups and provide the much-needed update on the performance of the NLC. Other potential beneficiaries will include – the governments at all levels, organized labour, employers of labour in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy; the International Labour Organization (ILO) as well as other international organizations, academics and researchers in higher institutions and other bodies, policy formulators at the governmental and non-governmental levels, students and the general public.

were many. As the founder and first general Secretary of the Union, he stated that:

Conditions of service were far from being satisfactory, there was complete absence of any scheme to address the issue of pension and gratuity. In addition, there was the need for teachers to take part in the planning of the school curricula, raise the educational and professional standards of teachers in Nigeria and above all, ensure a dignified teaching profession.

Lloyd (1963:70), observed that:

in contrast, the railway workers union was a militant organization from its inception and as one of its foremost leaders, Mr. Michael Imoudu claimed, it was an organized and effective agitation for the recognition of certain technicians and craftsmen against the maltreatment by European supervisors of Africa.

It was the first trade union to have been registered (17th January, 1940) under trade union ordinance. Ananaba (1949:50) submits that "Nigerian trade unions have exhibited a diversity of structure which is not bad. This has had profound influence on the character of industrial relations in Nigeria". Yesufu (1984:14), however, opines that "by March 1950, the number of trade unions had risen ten times from the 14 registered ten years earlier in 1940; the membership grew at an even faster rate from 4,629 in 1940, to about 110,000 in 1950". This is a development that may be explained as saying that while the number of registered unions increased by arithmetic progression, the membership grew at a geometric progression within the first decade of trade unionism in Nigeria .

Ananaba (1949:50) further observes that:

in the decade 1960-1970, the number of trade unions again increased with a membership of 684, 498 and 725 registered unions; this proliferation of unions led the federal government to issue a notice of cancellation of about 340 of them as noted in the federal gazette of 21 November 1976, and in pursuance of the trade unions (Amendment) Decree No. 22 Of 1978 which dissolved all

umbrella unions – the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC).

Olukoshi (1993:75) observes that:

Successive regimes and administrations in the country have attempted to whittle down the influences, solidarity and capacity of Nigeria Labour Congress through blackmail, arrest, detention and bribery. The reason is that various anti-people legislations or policies like the Structural Adjustment Programme, deregulation, retrenchment of workers, increase in petroleum pump price, etc, have been resisted by the NLC, and as the records show, the congress has often been seen or regarded as an obstacle to development.

The two major unions NLC and TUC are so strong and united that they have managed to keep afloat despite attempts to whittle down their influences, solidarity and capacity by successive regimes and administrations in Nigeria. In the context of the current obstacle, Bangura (1993:75) notes that "Nigerian government in her attempt to implement policies of structural adjustment met resistance from the workers. The workers apposed wage freezes, privatization, public sector cuts and increase in the prices of essential commodities and services". Following the opposition of above policies by the NLC-led workers which government viewed as obstructionist and irresponsible, the workers were accused of failing to make their due share of sacrifice and contribution towards the nation's economic recovery. Thus, Bakeman (1994:73) opines that:

Labour demands on government are seen as unreasonable and unrealistic; in the case of Nigeria Labour Congress, their opposition is treated as particularly illegitimate as it is viewed as coming from a small, privileged minority, pursuing narrow self-interests at the expense of the masses of the people, the poor and under-privileged peasants.

They are in the words of Bangura (1993:75), "taking undue advantage of being better placed, more organized, articulate and do not deserve the right to speak for the common people; the silent majority". It should be recalled that in 1988, an increase in the price of petroleum products,

The strategy of the NLC is to defend nominal gains in incomes and prices within a framework of mobilizing workers and other groups to discredit the general direction of the reform:

The strategy is presented to the effect that government relies on a combination of market and administrative instruments to depress workers' living standards. By waging militant struggles on these issues, the NLC seeks to expose the insensitivity of the adjustment programmes to the basic survival needs of workers (Beckman, 1993:817).

As liberalization and globalization measures further eroded the workers' incomes, the NLC intensified its struggle for the lifting of the barn on collective bargaining, mass employment, poverty alleviation and minimum wage increase, which the present government has pegged at N18, 000.00, following the National Assembly accent to the bill in February 2011. The NLC has also continued to champion the struggle for virile democratic practices and rule of law. The workers provide the backbone to popular struggles. Even when they had not initiated popular protest, workers intervention had often changed their character.

The Nigeria Labour Congress: An Overview

At the heart of any trade union worth its name is the welfare of workers who subscribe to it. The Nigeria Trade Unions in Nigeria formed in 1978, following a merger of four different organizations; viz Nigeria Trade Union Congress (NTUC), labour Unity Front (LUF), United Labour Congress (ULC), and Nigerian Workers Council (NWC). These also came from numerous affiliated unions which were later restructured into 42 industrial unions in pursuance of Trade Union Act, CAP T14 Laws of Federation of Nigeria (LFN), 2004, which emanated from preceding decrees. Nigeria Labour Congress has its closest rival in Trade Union Congress (TUC) presently headed by Peter Esele. The TUC had occasionally refused to join strikes initiated by NLC. As noted elsewhere by Osinkolu (2011:27), "Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC) are the country's two recognized labour congress... NLC serves senior workers, TUC is for junior workers, so they are expected to work together on issues pertaining to workers welfare". The two have been struggling for power influence and followership. NLC and TUC are presently on a war path over Union Bank of Nigeria policy on Labour.

The Nigerian Labour Act

The essential ingredients of labour and employment Act in Nigeria makes it illegal for wages and salaries of any worker to be paid in any other form except by cheque or cash and that employees are at absolute liberty to spend their income the way they like. While no employer can force an employee on how to spend his money, no employee is allowed to collect an advance payment of more than one month salary and no deductions can be made from a worker's salary except the law permits such. Within three months of employment, a worker must be issued a written statement of the terms and conditions of employment, specifying among others, the employee's name, where he/she will be working, his/her salary, the way and manner the contract can be terminated. The employment contract cannot provide for payment of wages at intervals of more than one month. Any change in the employment terms must be brought to the attention of the worker within one month. The labour act stipulates that parties may terminate a contract only after giving due notice to the other party (there are stipulated deadlines depending on the duration of the contract). For every period of seven (7) days, a worker shall be entitled to 24 consecutive hours of rest.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework analysis for this work revolves around the usual relationship which often exists between labour and Government in every part of the world. Characteristic of such relationship is frequent conflict and eventual bargaining. The framework finds more relevance and expression in an unstable polity and economy such as we find ourselves in Nigeria.

The study adopts as its theoretical framework, the Game Theory which to Martin Shubik is a mathematical method for the study of some aspects of conscious decision-making cooperation. It deals with processes in which the individual decision unit has only partial control over the strategic factors affecting its environment. Both Schelling and Shubik, along with other game theorists have built upon the foundation laid by Beumann and Morgenstern who, in their pioneering work laid emphasis on a mathematics abstract form of reasoning, arising from a combination of logic and mathematics. The thrust of the theory is that it is impossible for any one player to make a choice because whatever choice made by him depends largely on the choice or choices made by the other players. Hence nearly all

Data Presentation**Section A**

This section presents responses from interviewees as converted to percentages in the following manner.

Table I: General information on the operation of the NLC

S/N	Question Item	Agree	%	Disagree	%	Total	%
1	Periodically, the NLC organizes summits, seminars and workshop to acquaint workers with government policies on employment	10	100	0	0	10	100
2	Such summits are also often designed to stimulate workers' awareness on the implications of government policies	10	100	0	0	10	100
3	The umbrella organization often condemns government policies which result to retrenchment and eventual unemployment	10	100	0	0	10	100
4	The organization often tries to explain the policies of international organizations and their implications on the Nigeria labour. Examples of such organizations include... the Bretton Wood (World Bank) institution, International Monetary Organization etc.	6	60	4	40	10	100
5	The NLC is known for exposing the fraudulent implications of government policies which turn public institutions over to private entrepreneurs despite huge profits made by such public institutions.	10	100	0	0	10	100

citizenry. This indicates that the organization has been actively operational over the years under review. Item No.3 aims at obtaining information on the contributions of labour towards improvement on the employment level and situation in the country. Questions 8 and 10 are tailored to address the issue of wages and salaries and improvement in living standard through regulation of fuel pump prices and the avoidance of the spillover effect which goes with such hikes. Items 4, 5, 6, 7, and 9 address the issue of the influence of the NLC on the socio-economic and political process of Nigeria as a nation.

Challenges of the NLC as the mouthpiece of the masses

Table II: This section aims at obtaining information on the challenges of the NLC as an umbrella organization.

S/N	Question Item	Agree	%	Disagree	%	Total	%
1	The organization often faces the challenges of the arrest of its leaders whenever it constitutes itself into an opposition policy.	9	90	1	10	10	100
2.	Does the NLC face the challenge of rivalry among member unions?	8	80	2	20	10	100
3	Is the organization sometimes faced by leadership crises?	10	100	0	0	10	100
4	During the military regime, did the organization face the problem of military intervention?	7	70	3	30	10	100
5	Is the umbrella organization faced by inadequate finances?	7	70	3	30	10	100
6	Is the organization bedeviled by the problem of corruption?	8	80	2	20	10	100
7	Is the organization affected by the global economic meltdown?	8	80	2	20	10	100
8	Is the umbrella organization also affected by the nation's unstable polity?	10	100	0	0	10	100

The above question items in this section are necessitated by the need to show how and what instruments the union uses to achieve its aims. There are only eight such items as shown above.

Operations of the NLC

According to Olayinka (2009:39):

Any responsible and focused government should show concern for the deteriorating and unemployment situation in Nigeria. This, compounded by the emigration of industries to neighboring countries like Ghana, Togo, and other relatively smaller countries due to poor infrastructural facilities.

In the opinion of the National Daily "834 firms were shutdown in the year, leading to mass unemployment" (The Nation 2011:17). It is for this reason that both the Nigerian government and the international labour organization, jointly organized the first national employment summit under the theme – 'Meeting the Challenges of the Global Economy and Financial Crises in Nigeria' in the first quarter of 2009. Salivating on the opportunity that the summit offered, the NLC criticized the role played by the economic policies of the Bretton Wood institution in the developing economies. The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) president Abdulwaheed Omar, described the free markets economy as "a monumental failure especially in the face of the on-going global economic recession". His argument was simple and straight forward stating that the collapse of global political economy would arrest development in developing countries, escalate unemployment and stultify growth. Thus:

In the light of the global crash of the economic practices that have been produced and supported by the neoliberal orthodoxy of the last three decades, politicians, economists, historians and various other groups, have drawn attention to the need to change the way in which economies in the advanced and much more so in the developing countries are managed around the world. (Abdulwaheed (2006:16) NLC Congress Bulletin.)

In his contribution, Fanimu (2009:39), observes that "the policies of the World Bank and of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), have been

millennium, the Nigerian state must return to the macroeconomic model of development planning that characterized our development, efforts in the earlier years which constitutes from all evidence, the most development and growth-oriented period in our history.

The NLC as an Ally to Government's Policies towards Economic Recovery

In an attempt to pursue its millennium policy towards rapid economic recovery, Osinkolu (2011:39), writes that "ahead of the planned delegates' conference of the Nigeria Labour Congress – NLC scheduled from March 1 – 3, the congress has held interactive session with the Nigeria Guild of Editors" (NGE). The session according to the NLC president comrade Abdulwaheed Omar (2009:23):

Was to intimate the editors that the NLC has developed plan for assisting the government to take the right steps in bailing the country out of the economic crisis. We cannot preach to you about patriotism and sacrifices; those are precisely what the media has stood for from colonial times. We share this same patrimony and therefore, wish to explore with you how we can jointly work together for the emancipation.

Praising the NLC policy directions which he believes have yielded fruitful results since the advent of democratic rule, Omar (2009:23), continues -

In the last four years, due to the collective efforts of the labour movement, the consistent position of the masses of our country, and wise counsel in the government, not to persist blindly with its religion of deregulation, fuel has been available across the country and the prices stable. NLC intends to adhere to this policy because to do otherwise will be to worsen the already precarious situation of the Nigerian people.

According to Osinkolu (2011:38):

The congress intends to unionize workers in the informal sector, especially, the self-employed. It also plans to work closely with its allies, especially the civil society in a bid to protect the broad interests of the generality of the

agency, but NLC, still calls on the National Assembly to pass the Freedom of Information Bill, and to open its financial books for public scrutiny.

The policy direction of the Federal Government in the 2011 budget as regards employment generation is commendable. The NLC pledges to identify with plans to initiate a new national job creation scheme and its emphasis on labour-intensive public work, but cautions that the scheme should not be reduced to another bureaucracy. It also calls on the Federal Government to take some proactive measures in securing the citizenry, from violent crimes. The congress cites the Niger Delta and Jos crises as major challenges to Nigeria's national co-existence while observing that the continuation of Amnesty programme in 2010, saw some relative peace in the Niger Delta.

The congress remains opposed to the auctioning of the refineries. The deregulation for the NLC, the continuing crisis in the downstream sector of the petroleum industry with such symptoms as product scarcity, non-functioning of our refineries, inefficiency and corruption in regulatory agencies and total dependence on importation of fuel, is not only a national disgrace but completely unacceptable. The fact that 2010 enjoyed steady supply of petroleum products at official rates, shows that it is possible to ensure the improvement of the welfare of the people with commitment from government. It also reveals that if there is the will and commitment from all and sundry, things can work smoothly in Nigeria.

Power generation and distribution constitute another area of daunting challenge in Nigeria. This sector has equally gulped billions of naira of the Nigerian citizens without a commensurate improvement in services. This sad situation according to the NLC, has led to the closure and emigration of many industries, job losses and unemployment. The congress resists and remains opposed to the planned increment in electricity tariff before the generation of sufficient power in the country. It (the NLC) identifies with the Federal Government position on the political crisis in Niger, Guinea-Bissau and Cote d'Ivoire and calls on the African Union, ECOWAS and Nigerian Government, to fashion out a more innovative way of ousting Laurent Gbagbor out of power.

On the issue of living wage, the NLC, insists that there will be no retreat on the issue of acceptable national minimum wage of N18,000.00 for the workers. The N18,000.00 was short of the N52,000.00 demanded by NLC, which necessitated the Federal Government setting up of a tripartite committee on national minimum wage headed by justice Alfa Belgore, former

country. Contrary to this assertion, the study records unanimity in agreement to the fact that the NLC was actively operational on the six of the ten question items which include organizing summits, seminars and workshops to acquaint workers with government policies on employment; stimulate workers awareness on the implications of government policies; expose fraudulent implications of government policies; stress the need to take back enterprises like Eleme Petrochemical Company, Ajaokuta Steel Plant etc; condemns government policies that boarder on retrenchment; and insist on better pay package for the Nigerian worker.

By insisting on a minimum wage of N18,000.00 which is now almost actualized, and achieving various wage increases between 1978 and 2011 as reflected on Table IV, the NLC has succeeded in achieving increased wages and salaries for the Nigerian worker. An increase in wages/salaries leads to increase in disposable income of the individuals concerned. It needs be mentioned at this point that improved wages/salaries alone cannot raise a peoples' standard of living. Some other ingredients are needed like, improved medicare, housing/accommodation, food/nutrition, recreational facilities, etc. While the government cannot claim to have scored high in all above indices, it certainly made bold attempts in some areas as statistics of capital project funding below indicates –

Table V: Nigerian Federal Government Capital Expenditure Profile, 2004-08
₦Billions

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Administration	137.8	171.5	185.2	227.0	287.1
General Administration	109.0	132.6	152.8	178.3	210.3
Defence	8.7	16.8	15.7	24.3	32.3
Internal Security	18.2	17.8	12.6	10.6	28.9
National Assembly	1.9	4.3	4.1	9.2	15.6
Economic Services	167.8	265.0	262.2	358.4	504.4
Agriculture and Natural Resources	38.7	60.3	89.5	94.1	106.0
Manufacturing, Mining and Quarrying	5.0	8.6	7.3	8.1	12.7
Transportation and Communication	7.0	15.6	8.2	314	80.1
Housing	2.3	6.7	2.8	5.8	8.9
Roads and Construction	40.7	89.1	72.5	105.7	126.9
National Priority projects	-	-	-	-	-
JVC Calls/NNPC Priority Projects	-	-	-	-	-

from ₦351.3 billion in 2004, to ₦519.4 billion in 2005, ₦552.4 billion in 2006, ₦759.3 billion in 2007 and ₦960.9 billion in 2008.

Increased wages and salaries alongside the steady improvement in funding in the areas of capital expenditure and Agriculture is aimed at improving the standard of living of the people. Consequently, it has improved the standard of living of the people. This proves hypothesis (Ho)¹ to the contrary and answers research question one (RQ-1)

Hypotheses (Ho)²

The activities of the Nigeria Labour Congress have not facilitated a reduction in the level of unemployment in the country within the period under review. In the opinion of The Nation (2011:17), "834 firms were shut down in the year 2009, leading to mass unemployment". Describing the free market economy as a monumental failure. Government came under sharp criticism from labour. For this reason, the Nigerian Government in conjunction with the international labour organization, jointly organized the first national employment summit under the theme – "Meeting the Challenges of the Global Economy and Financial Crises in Nigeria" in the first quarter of 2009.

Furthermore, as an ally to Government policies towards economic recovery the congress held interactive session with the Nigeria Guild of Editors (NGE). Also, apart from the need to urgently and comprehensively address the job issue, the NLC is of the view that the business of government must include the provision of mass housing, water and education for all children to senior secondary school grade. Thus, the NLC pledged to identify with plans to initiate a new national job creation scheme by the Federal government as well as the emphasis on labour – intensive public work but cautions that the scheme should not be reduced to another bureaucracy.

Item No.3 on Table I (General information on operations of the NLC) yields results from an in-depth interview to the effect that the umbrella organization often condemns government policies which lead to retrenchment and eventual unemployment. Given a (100%) the unanimous response to such condemnation, and the information recalled above, it is safe to conclude that, whereas the NLC activities within the period have not succeeded in forcing government to create more jobs out-rightly, the activities were able to influence government to initiate policies to improve the employment situation. This is to the extent that government introduced a new national job creation scheme with emphasis on labour intensive public

Table VI. Nigeria: Unemployment Rates by Urban, Rural and National Classification (1976-1997)

Year	Urban	Rural	National
1976	-	-	4.3
1980	-	-	6.4
1984	7.9	4.4	6.2
1985	9.8	5.2	6.1
1986	9.1	4.6	5.3
1987	9.8	6.1	7.0
1988	7.8	4.8	5.3
1989	8.1	3.7	4.5
1990	5.9	3.0	3.5
1991	4.9	2.7	3.1
1992	4.6	3.2	3.4
1993	3.8	2.5	2.7
1994	3.2	1.7	2.0
1995	3.9	1.6	1.8
1996	3.9	2.8	3.4
1997	8.5	3.7	4.5

Sources: Data for 1976-1998 were obtained from FOS (1997-1999) while the rest were compiled from CBN – Nigeria: Major Economic, Financial and banking Indicators, April 1998.

Evidence from table vi shows that unemployment fell significantly after 1987. It fell consistently from 7.0 percent in 1987 to 3.1 percent in 1991. Although, it rose marginally to 3.4 percent in 1992, the unemployment rate, however consistently declined appreciably to 1.8 percent in 1995 before rising to 3.4 and 4.5 percent in 1996 and 1997 respectively.

Table VII (A). Unemployment by Age Groups (1993 – 1997) (Percentage) Nigeria.

Year	15-24	25-43	44-59	60-64
1993	69.0	25.2	5.8	NA
1994	70.4	21.0	8.6	NA
1995	57.5	28.7	13.8	NA
1996	42.9	46.0	11.1	NA
1997	41.6	49.7	6.0	2.7
Annual Average 1993-97	56.3	34.1	9.1	-

Source: Compiled and calculated from FOS: Annual Abstract of Statistics, 1998.

All tables above – i.e. VII a, b and c show the fluctuations in rates of unemployment; dropping from 32.1% in 2003 to 28.9% in 2004, rising to 34.2% in 2005 and dropping to 30.8% in 2006. These indicate a clear effort by Government to stem the tide of unemployment – an effort that has been partly induced by sustained pressure from the NLC.

Similarly, Bureau of Statistics in its 2009 survey presents the picture of overall unemployment as follows:-

Year	Rates
2000	13.1
2001	13.6
2002	12.6
2003	14.8
2004	13.4
2005	11.9
2006	12.3
2007	12.7
2008	14.9
2009	19.7

Source: FOS 2009.

Following concerted labour activities, the seriousness of unemployment problem has attracted government attention over the years. Employment generation has featured prominently in the past medium-term National Development Plan (1962-1985). This led to the establishment of several government parastatals (whose primary objective was to create employment opportunities) in addition to the creation of institutions such as the Industrial Training Fund (ITF), to drastically reduce the problem of unemployment. The adoption Structural Adjustment Programme also ushered in the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) whose primary responsibility was to generate employment opportunities with emphasis on the development of entrepreneurship and self employment. Besides NDE, other programmes, with employment implications, established by the government include: the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure; the Better Life for Rural Women/Family Support Programme; the Development of Small-Medium Scale Enterprises; the Raw Materials Research and Development Council; the Peoples' Bank of Nigeria and the

On a general note, the Nigerian Labour Congress has often criticized the quality of governance, the government policy on Deregulation and Power Supply, the issue of insecurity in Nigeria and the need to ensure credible general elections in the country. It is in this vein, that the congress calls on the national assembly to pass the Freedom of Information Bill and open its financial books for public scrutiny. It also observes that the judiciary has become a redeeming agent. While hailing the relative peace in the Niger Delta and condemning the continued escalation of violence in Plateau State – (Jos), the congress calls on the Federal Government to take some proactive measures in securing the citizenry from violent crimes. Its opposition to the auctioning of the refineries is quite noteworthy. The congress remains adamant to its stance on deregulation, the continuing crisis in the downstream sector of the petroleum industry, with such symptoms as product scarcity, non-functional refineries, inefficiency and corruption in regulatory agencies and total dependence on importation of fuel is not only a national disgrace but completely unacceptable. The fact that 2010 enjoyed steady supply of petroleum products at official rates shows that it is possible to ensure the improvement of the welfare of the people with a commitment from government. NLC calls on government to do something in this direction to make things work out.

The power sector constitutes another area of great concern. The issue of power generation and distribution remains a daunting challenge. The sector has gulped billions of naira without a commensurate improvement in services. This sad situation according to the NLC, has led to the closure and emigration of many industries, job losses and unemployment. Congress reiterates its willingness to continue to oppose and resist the planned increment in electricity tariff before the generation of sufficient power in the country.

Finally, the Congress is seriously committed to making the 2011 General elections credible and according to Comrade Abdulwaheed Omar, the 2011 general election holds a lot of promise for the country. There is therefore, the pledge that the people be made to choose their leaders freely. NLC demands the political class to be more issue-based rather than seek to personalize politics.

Clearly, the above responses to such question items listed adequately prove the null hypothesis H_0_3 otherwise to support the fact that the NLC in its operations has positively impacted on the socio-economic and political

An interest group is a body of persons united by a common attachment to or longing for a particular value or ideal, which they are committed to advance, while a pressure group arises when the interest group actually begins to press upon the state or appropriate public institutions to facilitate or quicken the attainment of the objective. Hence, while it is possible for all pressure groups to also be interest groups, not all interest groups are automatically capable of uniting or sustaining the pressure necessary to attain its goals.

The Nigerian Labour Congress adequately fits into this definition. The umbrella organization has been involved in all sorts of politicizing in a bid to justify its position as the mouth piece of the masses/workers of this great nation. Pressure group politics primarily refers to the process of struggling to influence the political pendulum in favour of a particular interest group, even sometimes, at the detriment of others. As the largest interest group which seeks to protect the interest of the masses/workers of this country, this study has deemed it wise to pencil it down as a case study for pressure group politics. It has therefore, held useful interactive sessions with leaders of various unions within the umbrella, ten of them in number. These include the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT); The Non-Academic Staff Union (NASU); National Union of Food, Beverage and Tobacco Employees (NUFBTE); National Union of Hotel and Personal Services Workers Union (NUHPSW); Steel and Engineering Workers Union (SEWUN); Radio and Television Workers Union (RATAWU); Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU); National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW); National Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA); and the Nigerian Medical Association.

Thus, information from an indebt interview guide was galvanised in a content analytic approach to x-ray the operations of the NLC, its challenges instruments/mechanisms.

Major Successes of the NLC:

The ascendancy to the throne as Governor of Edo State, Comrade Adams Aliyu Oshiomhole, must be highlighted as a milestone success of the NLC in Nigeria. Born on April 4, 1953 in Iyamoh, near Auchi in today's Edo State, he proceeded to the Ruskin College, Oxford where he majored in

and they have five children – 2 Medical Doctors, an Accountant and two undergraduates.

Conclusion

Many Nigerians who are willing and able bodied are either unemployed or under employed. The congress, having acknowledged the job creation policy of the 2011 budget should monitor and make sure it is implemented. There is also an urgent need to compel the federal government to institute welfare packages for the old and unemployed, in the society. As the unofficial opposition party to the government, the present high cost of kerosene which affects the poor is unacceptable. Federal government should be compelled to see reason in establishing refineries in all the oil-producing states/communities in Niger Delta, so that more jobs could be created, technology developed, and, rather than being an importer, we should be exporting refined petroleum products. This may be a big challenge to the congress but, it is achievable. They should follow the path of honour, as pointed out recently by Hassan Suromonu- "A labour leader is rich in things other than money". *Daily Sun* – February 27.

Recommendations:

1. The contending trade unions like Trade Union Congress should fuse into the NLC: There is no gain saying the fact that two big umbrellas exist in the trade union movement in Nigeria. They include the Trade Union Congress and the Nigeria labour Congress. The existence of two such unions has generated some measure of rivalry. Common sense suggests that such unions should merge for stronger unionism and trade union activities.
2. NLC should unify and unionize the informal sector: The informal sector in Nigeria is known to encourage proliferation of other smaller union bodies. Better bargaining power for the unions can only be achieved when they come together and pool their resources together.
3. The present squabble over N5 billion naira loan from the Federal Government should be addressed: Union proliferation has led to squabble over N5 Billion Naira loan from the Federal Government. Unions are inclined to address the question of how much of the loan will account to them rather than implications of the loan and how to obtain it. This should be addressed more seriously.

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