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## **Emerging Issues in the World of Work: Implications for Women Workers, Women Unionists and Trade Unions**

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**Abstract:**

*In most parts of the world, women now constitute a substantial portion of the active participants in the global labour market. Women have qualitative representation in all sectors of work and have made appreciable inroads in professions hitherto and traditionally dominated by men. Equally noticeable is the attendant participation of women in trade union activities as a result of the perception that unions are genuine tools for protecting and advancing women issues. Trade unions are in the forefront of promoting equity by advocating for safe workplaces for women to work, learn and develop. .*

*Although, women are now competing favorably and equally in all spheres and there abounds evidence everywhere of women advancement at work, emerging trends in the world of work seems unfavorable to workers. These trends have impacted more negatively on women workers and trade unions constitute a veritable bulwark to palliate these deleterious effects. We will examine these effects within the context of the workplace and its connection with social and economic development paying attention to women career advancement and women in trade unionism. Then the paper will evaluate the prevalent forms of work and emerging issues and their implications on women workers.*

**Keywords:** *Women workers, trade unions, work, rights, globalization*

### **1. Introduction**

Work is at the core of human reality. It is an essential activity that defines the actualization of man's potentials. People work in order to meet the basic needs of life. Armstrong (2010) asserted that Most people work to earn a living – to make money. But they also work because of the other satisfactions it brings, such as doing something worthwhile, a sense of achievement, prestige, recognition, the opportunity to use and develop abilities, the scope to exercise power, and companionship. Indubitably, there is a worldwide interest in the work environment because of the centrality of work to human existence. Fajana (2000) remarked that work integrates the worker into the community, and to be out of work is considered socially and economically unproductive. In the contemporary work place, the two major stakeholders are workers and their representatives and employers and their associations. Both of these parties who should be equal joint key players and partners in progress have divergent, but correlated aspirations and objectives. Thomas(2012) noted that unionization as a concept, then, came out of and remains an act against the inherent inequity and tyranny in the workplace when the powerful few control the working many. Unionization is an act of democracy, an act of equity. From the perspective of Adewunmi (2007), 'trade unions arose to address the enormous problems faced at work, which include job insecurity, injustice, dependence and the inhuman conditions under which work is carried out. However, workplace dynamics and exigencies of the larger society, makes pragmatic and continuous qualitative dialogue, interactions, networking and engagement between workers and employers necessary to guarantee the continued existence of organizations and to achieve individual, group and organizational goals especially in the rapidly changing world of work which harbours limitless opportunities for women who according to ILO (2013) historically, have engaged in unskilled work and entered the labour market as low-level employees.

But the phenomenon of globalization as exemplified by opening of world markets, technological, social, economic and political changes have had a notable impact on the changing pattern of work and even the entire world of work worldwide of which Nigeria is not exclusive. However, the effects of these changes have been mainly deleterious to women and women workers and also pose daunting challenges to trade unions and governments on how to advance the welfare of women workers in the face of the impacts of the global economic meltdown. Infact, a report by the International Trade Union Confederation (2007) noted that women have proven to be the workers most adversely affected by globalization. On the other hand, Plant (1987) in pointing out that work is being promoted as one of the areas in which, through globalization, women have most to gain, noted that women, because they are "better culturally and psychologically" prepared for the work habits of the new millennium, will outdo their male counterparts in a more highly technologized world. However, Matsui (1999) in another breath espoused that the impact of globalization on women as

“violence”, in citing incidents of globalized violence against women factory workers, she concurred with a perspective that globalization is the latest in a stream of powerful forces arraigned against women.

At the heart of globalization are scientific and technological advancements which have resulted in dramatic innovations and far reaching developments in technology, defence, education, business, medicine, entertainment, sea, land and air transportation, trade, governance, communications, security and agriculture. Invariably, all these have led to rise in standard of living, improved life expectancy, accessibility of people to better-quality and affordable range of products, simplification of production processes and making life better for the generality of people worldwide. Marie (2004) affirmed that because all economies are linked into a global network of finance, investment, production and markets, it has become difficult for local and national economies to make decisions on prices of consumer goods, wages, and value of money and organize their production and society in manners to address their basic or peculiar needs. Most of these countries are expected to follow trends set by the global markets controlled by transnational corporations are so powerful that they often dictate the direction of economic policies and control the pace of business activities in any country that they operate and focus mainly on the international markets. The inextricable financial linkages between and among nations is so strong that the ripples of the 1997 Asian economic crisis and 2008 Global Economic meltdown caused untold havoc on nations, economies, organizations and individuals all over the world.

### *1.1. Socio-Economic Developments and Globalization*

For instance, new and emerging medical gadgets, drugs and treatment now prolong the lives of people with diverse ailments and combat hitherto unmanaged illnesses. Also, convenient and simple financial, business and social transactions have made life quite effortless and uncomplicated for majorities of people all over the world. The utilization of basic Information and Communications technology gadgets and devices such as I phones, I pads, tablets, laptops, blackberry, tecnos etc has made work to be seemingly easier for organizations and employees. We are also witnessing an era of rapid accessibility to and exchange of diverse information globally through Internet search engines, Electronic passports and biometric Identification cards. Globally, there has been great improvement in the sophistication of security methods and instruments ie Facial scan, DNA, Fingerprint, Iris, Palm, Forensic and biometric databanks. Through Global System of Mobile (GSM) and Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA) and other Information and Communications Technology devices, communication in Nigeria has not only become more accessible to people of diverse social and economic backgrounds, but it has also become easier, cheaper and effective. According to ILO, (2012) the availability of more job mobility, educational and employment opportunities has translated to better wages, better standard of living and higher life expectancy for women workers globally.

## **2. Globalization and Organizations**

Invariably, as a result of these changes, the types, structure of work, roles, systems and operations of organizations are constantly changing to cope with today’s dynamic operating environment. The rate and magnitude of these changes varies from state to state and sector to sector, but all over the world their effects on work place relations, mode and manner of work have been overwhelming. According to ILO (2013), Global competition tends to encourage formal firms to shift formal wage workers to informal employment arrangements and to encourage informal units to shift workers from semi-permanent contracts to piece-rate or casual work arrangements. It also often leads to shifts from secure self employment to more precarious self-employment, as producers and traders lose their market niche. In addition, long established practices and values have been discarded. In addition, long established practices and values have been discarded, while contractual relationships once respected, viable and durable, now starts and ends abruptly without compunction. Job security in the Federal public sector of Nigeria is now a thing of the past with the introduction of Contributory Pensions Scheme, Monetization of fringe and allied benefits policy, Bureau for public service reforms, Tenure ship policy for Directors in Federal Ministries, Departments and Agencies.

Therefore, several organizations have adapted and adjusted their various functions and structures to the dictates of the operating environment in the area of maintaining a manageable, but compact workforce in addition to headhunting skilled, experienced and highly paid executives. For instance the recruitments of Oscar Onyeama as Chief Executive Officer of Nigerian Stock Exchange, Mustafa Chike Obi as Managing Director, Asset Management Company Of Nigeria, Uche Orji, Managing Director of National Sovereign Investment Authority, Kyari Bukar as Managing Director, Central Securities Clearing System and Segun Ogunsanya as Chief Executive Officer/Managing Director, Airtel Nigeria etc. In addition, promotions are now based on other salient criteria other than seniority, year of entry or length of service. Other key areas that I identified includes

- Sensitivity to market changes/trends
- Introducing effective technologies and or processes
- Removing unwieldy bureaucracies
- Reducing operating cost and optimizing cost effectiveness
- Maximum utilization of resources, Curbing wastages and blocking leakages
- Improved productivity and or performance and enhancement of efficiency
- Divesting from periphery functions and focus on core activities
- Focus on Product acceptability and quality

## **3. Women and Career Advancement and Retention in the Workplace**

Historically, men have predominated occupations such as technical jobs and management. The identities, behaviors, experiences, relationships, practices, appearances, and language in these jobs relate more to men than to women. Conversely, professions like

teaching and nursing that possess a large number of women are said to have qualities such as empathy, caring, and nurturing. Perceived inequalities in access to education and training, inequalities in access to productive resources, reproductive responsibilities, and the stereotyping of gender roles all constrain women's opportunities for entry or re-entry into the labor force. Rathgeber(1992) had almost an exhaustive and graphic presentation of what has become the lots of the African woman in the face of the deepening crisis of economic adjustment in Africa when he noted that: "Women in developing countries (now) work longer hours, earn less money, have greater responsibilities, are less literate and numerate and have lower caloric intake in proportion to body weight than do men". In countries and among social groups where there are few opportunities to escape from poverty women usually have none. In situations where everyone must work long hours to secure sufficient income to provide basic needs, women must work even longer for they are faced not only with the necessity to contribute to household income but also must undertake all or most of the reproductive labour, including bearing and caring for children, preparation of food, looking after the elderly, nursing the sick and the multitude of other tasks that are labelled " women work" in most parts of the world.

Globally, there are common themes regarding women's position at work, and their work ethos. Some believe that they did not have the same opportunities as their male co-workers. Others feel that it would more take time to be better positioned in the work place. Several perceived that the organizational culture is largely patriarchal and masculine in nature, but that building a career is the only way to reach the top echelon in their respective enterprises. However as more women enter into the workforce and in line with changing nature of modern organizations, work cultures need to be changed to accommodate women needs. Such re-structuring does not mean a reduction in standards, but it only entails introducing different work modes that will enable women feel valued, respected, and that they can make a difference, but also, it adds to the competitive advantage of the workplace. Women workers are expected to be treated fairly and with dignity like their male counterparts in addition to being provided with suitable jobs that will give them the platform to utilize and demonstrate their skills, competences and knowledge, and finally to be remunerated equitably and comprehensively in accordance with their qualifications, contributions and experiences. However several factors and developments as enumerated beneath have constituted themselves as clogs in the wheels of progress of women advancement in the workplace:

- a) Diverse and multiple obligations of women workers to both their immediate and extended families .This is quite enormous especially in the traditional Nigerian setting. Hence women usually seek family members or house helps to fulfill their familial obligations. Some even go as far as quitting their jobs or seeking flexible appointments so that they could have appropriate time to take care of their personal responsibilities.
- b) The off-putting perception about women's focus on the family as a distraction that affects their commitment to work often affects their advancement in the workplace. Organizations that are seeking to maximize employee potentials and remuneration would not really be favorably disposed to female workers who have divided thoughts and attentions about their children etc, hence the doubts about women's unalloyed devoted to their profession.
- c) In addition, perceptions of women's capabilities also hinder their career progression trajectory which is also related to stereotyping and pigeon holing of women
- d) The high unemployment rate in Nigeria coupled with the millions of qualified, but unemployed people has really placed women in a disadvantageous position in terms of securing and retaining employment
- e) Women are usually reluctant to be posted away to another location, thus narrowing their chances of advancing in their organizations. Most enterprises seek employees who can be mobilized at short notice to perform crucial and important tasks without reluctance and they usually reward such obedient employees.

#### **4. Women in Trade Union Leadership Positions**

The fact that women hold two jobs one paid at work and the other one unpaid at home makes them have little or no time for union activities. Hein(2005) declared that that Family responsibilities may constitute a disadvantage in the labour market when they conflict with work demands, because of the way society is organized and care work is shared. Inarguably, child care and other family responsibilities equally combine to pose a barrier to greater participation of women in not only formal employment, but also in trade unionism. But despite these, there are immense benefits when women participate in trade unionism, when women are represented qualitatively at the top echelon of unions, when trade unions place attention on women issues and when women leaders and women unionists are effectively mobilized and organized. Women at the top echelon of unions are able to articulate and advance women's interests, in sync with this is the fact that the ability of women to achieve a solidarity of purpose with respect to successfully advocating women issues at work is usually enhanced by their capacity to attain certain levels of representation. Finally, the equal representation of men and women in the union leadership positions is not only an indicator of the level of democratization of unions, but it is also a sign that the union is an institution that espouses the basic principles of equality, equity, justice, fairplay and liberty

The broad consensus is that Trade unions should be in the forefront of promoting fair and equitable workplaces by advocating for workplaces that are safe, for women to work, learn and develop; ensuring that women workers are well-prepared, are supported with adequate tools and good working collaborations with employers to meet individual and organizational needs; Making sure our women workers have opportunities in the workplace to sharpen their skills and competences so that cumulatively they, their families and communities can be adequately remunerated to meet their social, economic and health needs. But a fact that cannot be controverted is that everyone gains when women are doing well at work—women themselves, trade unions, families, enterprises, communities and nation at large Apart from the union, organization and women themselves, the families of workers are also beneficiaries when unions are able to successfully raise the status of women. A key initiative from the recent AFL-CIO quadrennial 2013 convention in Los Angeles, United States in September was to place emphasis on working women focusing on areas such as equal pay for equal work; respect for the balance among work, family and community; forging and expanding partnerships with allies; and increasing equality

and building women's leadership within the labor movement. Experience has shown that when women thrive, the family and community flourish:

Women in leadership positions in trade unions know where it pinches and would surely focus on sensitive issues that have direct bearing on uplifting the status of women in the work place. Equally noteworthy is the belief that when unions work positively for women, it develops a sense of belonging, confidence and commitment to both the union and organization. Because the truth is that when unions that place women issues in the front burner of union and organizational discourse and action grow, women too will equally experience commensurate growth. Participation of women in trade union activities can serve to heighten women's consciousness and raising their awareness about current workplace and societal issues which may invariably lead to resultant utilization of their skills, knowledge and aptitude for individual, organizational and union development, increased agitation for the review of unfavorable union, organizational and national policies and the enhancement of their socio-economic, educational, physiological and psychological wellbeing. The ultimate goal should be opening of better income opportunities for women workers to improve their status and translate to improved financial strength of the union through increase in volume of check off dues.

## **5. Prevalent Forms of Employment and Work**

Over the years, some forms of employment have quietly crept into the world of work to supplant the traditional forms of work that employees were hitherto used to. The growing diversity of work and the changes in modern organizations effectively means newer and more flexible types of jobs will be evolving to meet with contemporary aspirations and challenges. According to Armstrong (2013), the nature of work alters as organizations change in response to new demands and environmental Pressures. In the same light, Hyman (1999) pointed out that the "new workplace" is one in which employees often have increased responsibilities but with reduced power and resources. As labor costs are reduced through the imposition of "lean" organization and the implementation of Human resource policies, employees are pressed to take increasing concern for "quality" and customer care, while at the same time putting themselves out for the enterprise i. to be fully committed to its values. The essence of these new forms of work is essentially to reduce operating costs, maximize worker wages and enhance organizational efficiency. Danesi(2008) also opined that "the changing patterns of work (e.g contract work, part-time work, and outsourcing) have created concerns for workers and workers/trade unions alike. Although, managing the different forms of work in contemporary organizations comes with magnimous challenges, it is expedient that relationships in organizations between employers and employees should be a positive one that promotes interdependency, partnerships, mutuality and amity. Such a relationship to Armstrong (2013) should provide a foundation for employment and employee relations policies, including the development of a climate of mutual trust. The Underlisted are the most widespread forms of work existing throughout the world.

### *5.1. Contract Work*

Developments in the ever changing business environments such as the Liberalization of trade, deregulation, privatization, mergers and acquisitions, relocation etc have all created intense competition within industries. This has resulted in a drive for cheaper means of labour and drastic reduction in labour costs. The ensuing modifications in work organizations and technologies induced by the search for more flexible and responsive work methods and employment modes have resulted in more contract work. Many private and public sector organizations in Nigeria now place emphasis on the recruitment of contract staff. The key strengths are no additional costs, no unnecessary attachments, low personnel costs and no trade unions. The 2006 Federal Bureau For Public Service Reforms guidelines in the Federal Public Service in Nigeria stipulated that cleaning, maintenance, security functions etc should be contracted out after disengaging workers. As a result most of the workers who lost their jobs in that exercise ended up being rehired as contract workers with less pay, poor terms of employment, reduced conditions of service and virtually no trade union rights

Majorities of the employees of the emerging telecommunications companies and generation financial institutions in Nigeria are actually contract or casual staff. Danesi (2011) estimates this figure at as much as 50% of their total work force. This is a global phenomenon because for instance outsourced workers at the University of London's Central Administration and several of its constituent colleges such as SOAS and Birkbeck work under exploitative conditions and are entitled to paltry workplace benefits. This means that most of these workers are not offered a pension scheme that is worth buying into and receive only the legal minimum for holidays and sick pay. Chaykowski and George (2008) asserted that in 2008, part-time, contract and temporary work and self employment comprised one-third of the jobs in Canada. This meant the contract work was among the top four jobs that was added to the Canadian Labour market in that year.

### *5.2. Electronic/ Telework*

These are simply jobs which normally utilize Information and Communications Technology gadgets and tools at locations distant from the employer's registered premises. For example, many US based ICT companies outsource some computer jobs to Bangalore based Indian workers because they are skilled, effective and their salaries are far lower than that of US workers. Their shift begins with a worker logging on to the internet to get his work schedule for the day and at the end of the day, he sends his work back to his supervisor in the US by email.

The advantage of this is that firms pay virtually low or no taxes, salaries/wages, utilities and other costs associated with maintaining offices. Although this kind of flexible work is mostly prevalent in Europe and the United States, with the rate of change in the world of work and the dynamism of socioeconomic and technological undercurrents, it would not be long before most organizations throughout the world starts embracing this form of work. It is against the background of the rising prevalence of e-work or e-workers

that the ILO(2007) noted that Telework has emerged as a collective bargaining issue for the social partners in numerous EU countries, including Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom

### *5.3. Temporary Work/ Contracted Labour Supply*

In most developing countries, skilled and unskilled workers recruited for organizations for a specific duration for specific projects i.e building bridges, roads, housing estates and other similar large scale projects are employed on a temporary and informal basis. In practice, temporary workers, who are mostly unskilled and among the poorest, receive neither the benefits of permanent workers nor additional wage rates to compensate for the loss of benefits. Once the project is completed, such workers are disengaged and are only recalled when the organization has awarded another contract and is about to start another project. The advantage is that such firms maintain few permanent employees at low cost when inactive, but the workers are greatly disadvantaged in that the job attracts poor wages, virtually no rights, no dignity/security and no terms of employment. A major issue, especially in large-scale infrastructural projects, is whether and how these temporary workers can receive benefits commensurate with what permanent (and registered) workers earn. To buttress this, ACILS (2008) opined that many men and women labor permanently as “temporary” workers, with no health or pension benefits, sick or annual leave, or even the assurance that they will have a job the next morning

### *5.4. Seasonal Work*

These are jobs that are available in particular periods or times in particular countries in the world. These types of jobs may be dominated by people from a particular country, tribe or ethnic group. Examples are Nigerien and Chadian security men in Nigeria, Moroccan/Tunisian crop harvesters in Spain, Mexican peasants fruit pickers on Large US plantations, Nigerian street traders in Greece, foreign students working during holiday periods in Europe and United States of America, American tour guides in Israeli, Japanese tourist operators in New Zealand and English speaking coordinators of international courses worldwide. Most of these jobs can be classified as precarious work which Evans and Gibbs (2009) said has the following characteristics: ‘atypical employment contracts, limited or no social benefits and statutory entitlements, high degrees of job insecurity, low job tenure, low wages, and high risk of occupational injury or disease’.

### *5.5. Migrant Work*

Migrant workers are nationals of one country working in another – some enter the host country legally and others do not. Awad (2009) observed that depending on countries of destination, migrant workers are known to be noticeably present in such sectors as construction, manufacturing, hotels and restaurants, manufacturing, health care, education, domestic service and agriculture. Migrant work may also be some types of jobs that are usually reserved for migrants from some particular nations in a host country. It is often legal because citizens of that particular country either may not like the job or could be suffering from manpower shortages in that particular area. Discrimination against migrant workers is reflected in their poor integration in host societies, their high unemployment rates, lack of recognition of their skills and experience, as well as growing xenophobia (ILO 2013:22) All migrants and their families are entitled to their basic rights. as non-citizens, but they are usually denied some rights, such as the right to vote. Examples are Nepalese managing old age homes in Israel, Eastern European elderly caretakers in Italy, Turkish construction workers in Germany, Nurses in United states of America, United Kingdom, Canada etc, foreign Doctors in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates etc, Palestinian and African workers in Israel. According to ILO(2007), Women from Philippines, Indonesia, Ethiopia, and other South and South-East Asian countries constitute between 20-40% of the migrant workforce in the GCC Nations.

An AFL/CIO publication on justice for all a guide to workers rights in a global economy in 2003 noted that approximately 500,000 Burmese migrant workers are employed mostly in the seafood industry of Thailand. They live in cramped, filthy, unfurnished and expensive quarters. In addition, migrant workers do not receive benefits, the minimum wage or protection from forced overtime. According to Workers United (2013), migrant workers in Qatar have no right to unionize or strike, though they make up 99 % of the private sector workforce. At the 92<sup>nd</sup> Session of the International labour Conference in 2004, the tripartite constituents of the ILO defined the protection of migrant workers. The concept of protection found in the resolution “Towards a fair deal for migrant workers in the global economy” adopted by the ILC in 2004 includes dimensions of rights of migrant workers, their employment, their social protection and social dialogue in respect of the issues their migration raises. Additionally, CEDAW Committee’s 2008 General Recommendation No. 26 on women migrant workers and the United Nations Committee on Migrant Workers Comment No. 1 adopted in January 2011 outlined steps that member states are required to take to protect the rights of migrant domestic workers

### *5.6. Domestic Work*

The increased global mobility of labor and the feminization of migration have made domestic work a globalized profession, with women moving from poorer countries to richer ones in their millions to meet the growing demand for domestic services in recipient countries and to support their families back home. Domestic workers comprise mainly female migrants in Western European, Gulf Cooperation Council and high- and middle-income Asian countries. It is regarded as different to regular employment and therefore is often explicitly excluded from labor laws and social protection, leaving domestic workers vulnerable and susceptible to exploitation and abuse by unscrupulous employers. For instance, it is estimated that women account for nearly two thirds of Sri Lanka’s one million international migrants, many of whom are employed in the Gulf States as domestic workers. These women contribute very significantly to the economies of their home countries, annually accounting for more than \$1.7 billion in remittances. Also in Costa Rica, An estimated 70,000 girls and young women, many of whom were Nicaraguan immigrants, and 40 percent of whom started work before age 14, were working as domestic servants

Several countries have legislated to protect domestic workers. For example, Jordan has amended its labor laws to include domestic workers, guaranteeing monthly payment of salaries, sick leave and a maximum 10-hour working day. The law on domestic violence in Indonesia includes protection of domestic workers against violence within its scope. In Brazil, the National Federation of Domestic Workers is lobbying to expand domestic workers' rights in the Constitution, obliging employers to provide both retirement and employment insurance, to observe strict limits on working hours, to pay for overtime and to provide social benefits on the same terms as other workers. In 2011, the International Labor Organization adopted an ILO convention no 189 on Decent work for Domestic workers and its accompanying recommendation no 201 at the 100th session of its International Labor Conference to bring a large sub-sector of workers currently under-protected or unprotected by the national law, out of informality.

## **6. Home Work**

The Home Work Convention, 1996 (No. 177) defines home work as work carried out by a person, for remuneration, in his or her home or in other premises of his or her choice, other than the employer's workplace, which results in a product or service as specified by the employer, irrespective of who provides the equipment, materials or other inputs used. Millions work in the informal economy as home-based workers and paid domestic workers. Like domestic work, home-based work is generally assumed to be an extension of women's unpaid domestic responsibilities, so it is often not recognized or valued and is not regulated by the law. In South Asia alone, there are 50 million home-based workers, of whom four out of five are women. Home work which is currently gaining ground in Nigeria ranges from traditional crafts such as weaving or embroidery, and processing natural products like making rope or shelling cashew nuts, to industrial work, such as making leather shoes, garments or trimming rubber and plastic parts. It is usually labour intensive and done by hand.

This form of work almost always takes place outside of formal systems of labour or social regulation without basic rights to a minimum wage, social security or a pension. However, there is a growing recognition that women's entitlement to social benefits should not depend on the type of work they do. Over the past two decades, the ILO has adopted a number of standards to extend protection to women workers, including the Convention on Part-Time Work in 1994 and on Home Work in 1996.

## **7. Performance Related/Commission Work**

These are jobs that do not attract regular wages and salaries. They do not even attract leave and other generous conditions of employment. They depend solely on performance i.e what an employee sells or markets qualify him or her for a certain bonus or commission in monetary terms. For instance, majority of fuel attendants in Nigerian petrol stations do not earn regular salaries, but mainly bonuses related to the magnitude of fuel sold at their respective petrol pumps

Remuneration is based on agreement reached with the organization which entitles the employee to a certain percentage of any job obtained or product sold. So if no sale was recorded, no job or contract obtained, then the employee will earn nothing and the organization loses nothing. Therefore, the employee has more to lose here than and they would be willing to do anything to have some stipend to meet their basic needs. Likewise most street traders dotted across the major streets of the nation only earn wages based on agreed fractions of the goods they are able to sell.

## **8. Emerging Issues in the Workplace and Implications for Women Workers and Trade Unions**

A fundamental fact, as underlined by the 2004 report by the ILO's World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization is that globalization had not resulted in benefits to most people; rather, it had made matters worse in many cases, failing to meet workers' "simple aspiration for decent jobs, livelihoods and a better future for their children. Again owing to prevailing gender roles, perceptions and conditions, women are often forced to accept working conditions that inhibit them from exercising some of their fundamental human rights related to equal pay for equal work, maternity protection, social security and family leave (ILO 2013: 37). Against the backdrop of the above, it is auspicious to extensively observe the implications of these emerging issues for women workers and also the trade unions. This is quite important so that women leaders have deep knowledge of key women issues in the workplace, how it affects them and how women workers and the unions can collaborate and brainstorm to fashion out coping strategies or palliatives. Most of these issues might be broad and not applicable to one union per se, but undoubtedly they are interconnected and serve to enrich knowledge, strengthen the capacity and deepen the ability of trade union leaders to respond to diverse labour issues.

A growing situation in the world is the growing formalization of the relationship between management and employees with the resultant insensitivity of employers to issues pertaining to the welfare and aspirations of workers. A reference in point was the inability of the then management of University of Ilorin to obey and promptness to file an appeal against the ruling of a Federal High Court, Ilorin for the reinstatement of some sacked lecturers without loss of pay, a glaring manifestation of the disdain for and inability to be moved by the plight and suffering of the 49 sacked lecturers. This issue case 2267 attracted criticism for the Federal Government of Nigeria in the 340<sup>th</sup> Report of the International Labor Congress's committee on Freedom of association in March 2006. A global example is Turkish airline's inability to accept any of the civil Aviation Union of Turkey's collective bargaining proposals and refusal to reinstate 305 unfairly dismissed workers since May 2013 despite the fact that an Istanbul law court recently ruled that these illegal practices by THY are in clear violation of Articles 65 and 68 of the Unions and Collective Agreement (Law no 6356)

Emergence of leaner and compact enterprises-- Gone is the era when most factories and even work environments utilized old forms of production, deploying large expanse of land, big machines, large numbers of supervisors and workers. Nowadays, modern organizations maximize space; deploy small, but effective technologies requiring fewer, but highly skilled and remunerated workers. This lean organizational and staff structure connotes fewer workers and reduction in visibility and magnitude of workers groups and

women are always the major casualties in such schemes. Flexible work patterns make it difficult to organize workers for collective representation which is at the core of fundamental principles and rights at work. This also creates immense difficulty in identifying the real employer for bargaining purposes which is exactly the fate of the contract staff in the public service and outsourced workers in the private sector in Nigeria. Women are usually the main victims in this regard because majorities of outsourced workers who fall under these circumstances are women, thus it becomes quite difficult enhancing their socio-economic interests in the industry.

Mounting attention placed on individual bargaining instead of collective bargaining especially in the organized private sector in Nigeria. The employer expects individual workers to be rewarded separately based on their respective performance, contributions, experience and qualifications not collectively under any union canopy. With this, there is minimal or no recourse to neither trade unions as platforms for enhancing workers interests nor gender or equality bargaining which normally encompasses vital women issues like in formal collective bargaining. Individual bargaining covers wages, salaries bonuses etc. alone leaving out more fundamental women concerns. Undoubtedly, collective bargaining is a key strength and tool of unions and once this is being impeded or curbed, then there is a great threat to union relevance, effectiveness and importance. Nowadays, Employment security is virtually nonexistent in both the private and public sector of the Nigerian economy. Hyman ( 2009) captures this when he stated that the most dramatic feature of labour market trends in the past two decades has been a massive growth of insecurity. He further remarked that survey evidence from a range of countries shows that the fear of job loss either through collective redundancy or through victimization by the employer – is the overwhelming work-related concern of employees today. Constant job losses are a threat to socio-economic development and International Labor Organization's Decent Work Agenda. Retrenchment or rationalization translates to more problems for the working poor i.e. the disengaged and their families. Dependency increases with loss of each job, poverty spreads and everybody loses. Invariably, as a result of their preponderance and status in the workplace and the outer society, the severest impacts of poverty and disengagement are usually felt by women and women workers. Due to the Global Economic meltdown, the share of women in the total of jobs lost in some of the worst hit industries in Thailand was between 70 and 90%. For instance, Atobatele (2006) affirmed that in April alone , fifty two top and middle level managers and professionals in Nigerian Airspace Management Agency and Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria including its Managing Director were sacked, while the Management of the then only viable surviving textile company in Kaduna, Nigeria United Nigeria Textiles Plc sacked its entire workforce of 1,200 citing inability to operate and survive in a fiercely competitive global market.

Growing intolerance, non-relevance and weakness of unions with the promulgation of several statutory and organizational policies to emasculate the movement and stultify workers. There are clearly present and potential threats to freedom of association, right to organize and right to collective bargaining with the attendant curtailing of workers' rights to same in private and public sector enterprises despite the existence of virile unions and legal backing for their existence and functionality. Systematic involvement of the state and legal barriers to democratic trade union activity are multiplying. Governments' anti-union tactics include dissolving unions, denying unions' legal recognition, seizing union property, violently repressing strikes and marches and imposing legal restrictions that threaten to legislate many unions out of existence. This is a worldwide phenomenon. According to an ACTU Media Release, the Australian Government in March 2006 promulgated new Industrial Relations laws that seek to take away protection from unfair dismissals for more than three million employees and allow employers to cut the pay and conditions of working Australians. Between 2012 and 2013, we have seen forceful dispersal of protests in Nigeria, United States of America, Turkey, Bahrain, Iran, Hungary etc. In the same vein, Hyman (1999) noted that in some countries there has been a growing unwillingness to accept trade unions as collective representatives of employees. Hall (2012) noted that Governor Scott Walker of Wisconsin in one swoop eliminated the collective bargaining rights of 380,000 public employees,...made wage discrimination easier by repealing Wisconsin's Equal pay enforcement law and raised taxes on 145,000 low-income families with children..

Employers are greatly exploiting the massive unemployment situation, emerging industrial relations climate and ineffective regulatory environment. This situation is often compounded by the ostensible partiality of government on the side of the employers through the actions and statements of key Government officials. Hence, they often ignore trade unions, skip collective bargaining agreements and seek to circumvent legal decisions that favor unions. At times they could deploy temporary work contracts as an effective means of discouraging trade union participation. Hyman(1999) also pointed out that while collective bargaining has survived its scope has been reduced, and managements have established new forms of direct communication with employees as individuals. In Nigeria, indigenous and foreign organizations in the private sector are treating the national labor legislations with so much impunity and workers are helpless. Industrial democracy connotes participation and democratic decision making in the workplace that enables stakeholders are able to organize, engage and dialogue with each other effectively and procedurally. In this regard, the state has a great role to play in setting the enabling framework and creating the favorable climate. The above trend coupled with the gradual decrease in union numerical strength over the past decade has undoubtedly affected union virility, functionality and utility. Nigeria has witnessed declining trade union density in both sectors of the economy within the past decade as a result of a combination of factors mainly retrenchment of workers and business closures as a result of unfavorable economic climate. With this kind of existing scenario and with unions battling for survival, it may become quite herculean for them to champion core women issues in the workplace which would invariably affect the promotion and advancement of women workers rights. Not unexpectedly, there is a virtual absence of established unions in most new generation financial institutions and telecommunications companies like MTN, Airtel, Stanbic- IBTC, Etisalat, Zenith Bank, Huawei, Globacom, Heidelberg, Virgin Atlantic, British American Tobacco etc. These organizations and several more across the entire length and breadth of the nation openly defy Section 3 (1) of the Trade Unions Act Cap 437 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 1990 which makes it mandatory for organizations with at least 50 workers to form Trade unions without sanctions and reprimand from regulatory agencies and relevant authorities

Frequent restructuring, acquisitions, rationalizations, mergers, reorganization in the Nigerian public and private sectors etc has not really augured well for workers ( most especially women workers) and their representative groups as they are usually the major casualties of these trends. For example National Institute of Socio-Economic Research/National Manpower Board, Oceanic Bank/Eco bank Transnational Incorporated, Chevron/Texaco, Intercontinental/Access Bank, Exxon/Mobil, scrapping of Rural Electrification Agency and National Board for Community Banks, Merger of Federal Office of Statistics and National Data Bank, Acquisition of Benue Cement company by Dangote Cement. A major contemporary issue is the deliberations on the implementation of the recommendations of the Steve Oronsaye committee on the restructuring and rationalization of over 520 Federal Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies of the Federal Government of Nigeria. But the greatest value has been the creation of greater job mobility opportunities for women technocrats and professionals across countries, organizations, sectors etc. we have seen and we are seeing women excelling in varied positions and professions across the globe. Janet Yellen, Chairman, Board of Governors, US Federal Reserve System, Hadiza Kangiwa, Federal Commissioner For Refugees, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director, UN Women, Christian Lagarde, Managing Director, International Monetary Fund, GN Elemo, Director General, Federal Institute for Industrial Research, Oshodi, Halima Jacob, Singapore's First Female Speaker of Parliament, Inna Ciroma, Managing Director, National Inland Waterways Authority, Asabe Ahmed, Executive Secretary, Petroleum Equalization Fund, , Amina Idris, Executive Secretary, Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, Beatrice Jedy Agba, Executive Secretary, National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking In Persons, Joy Bob Manuel, Director General, Legal Aid Council, Rosalyn Higgins, International Court of Justice, Joy Ogwu, Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations, Lydia Nsekera, First Female elected member, FIFA Executive committee

Persistence of wide age gaps across all regions and sectors despite decades of equal pay legislations. Based on available information from 83 countries, the ILO reports that women are generally paid between 10 and 30 % less than men. According to the International Trade Union Congress (2013), the average gender pay gap is 29% in Argentina, 22 % in Poland and 24 % in the Republic of Korea. These wage gaps reflect the fact that women doing the same or comparable jobs are paid less than men for the same work, but they are also indicative of the fact that women tend to be concentrated in low-paid work. The persistence could be attributed to the emergence of various forms of work, the unemployment situation in several countries and activities of unscrupulous employers. Tackling this issue, requires concerted efforts spearheaded by unions in partnership with social partners. Another issue of paramount importance to is the Inability of the Nigerian labour administration system and structure to cope with or address emerging developments in the world of work. Hence, the attendant effete regulatory mechanism, inability to fully implement laws, ineffective sanctions for labour infringements etc. in Nigeria. With all these, the rampant manner and impunity public and private sector employers flout our labour laws should not come as a surprise to discernible observers. The majorities of the workers who receive the heavy blows from the fallouts of the above are those who work in low paying, low skilled jobs with little or no conditions of service. Sectors and Jobs occupied mainly by women. With operable and jointly formulated or agreed labour laws and standards in place, both parties can work towards its implementation for worker and enterprise development. In pointing out the clear benefits to workers, Dorman (2000) noted that compliance with labour standards usually implies, for example, more certainty and financial stability, better training, less work-related accidents, better health, better education (for children who do not work, for example), all of which have positive spill-over effects on the economy and the society.

The emergence of Multicultural work environments and intercontinental business prospects has led to increase in workplace diversity and opportunities for women in employment. For instance Maersk AP Moeller, the operator of container terminal, Apapa employs highly skilled and mobile workforce from different parts of the world. Women have taken up careers in areas once considered the exclusive prerogative of men. Despite all these, it is also getting increasingly difficult for women, mostly young women to reconcile family duties with paid work without affecting their chances of career advancement, skills enhancement etc. Women in trade unions are particularly bogged down by triple family, work and union responsibilities. This is the situation in most emerging and transition economies in the world. There are great challenges in effectively educating rank and file women. A major goal of Nigerian unions must be to constantly and consistently build the capacity of their women members on the dynamics of trade unions, emerging workplace and socioeconomic and political trends and or undercurrents in the society to help them anticipate and keep abreast of change. Most female workers do not really have a sound grasp about what unionism entails, so they need to be sensitized about the essence of the unionism, challenges associated with unionism, benefits of unionism and their individual roles as union members. Of utmost urgency is the imperative to provide adequate advisory services for members especially women to fully understand the terms and conditions of their employment and adequately prepare them for future challenges in this era of change. Lastly, unions should engage in robust advocacy and sensitization exercise about union programmes, policies, plans and actions.

In the recent past, privatization and commercialization of public utilities in Nigeria without adequately involving trade unions, concern about fate of workers and resolution of contentious workplace issues etc has been quite harmful to workers and their representative groups. Most of the new owners of these erstwhile public corporations end up sacking workers and short changing on pension/gratuity schemes i.e. Nigerian Airways, National Oil Plc, Ajaokuta and Delta steel companies, National Insurance Corporation of Nigeria, Nigerian Telecommunications etc. Unions such as Senior Staff Association of Electricity and Allied Corporations and Nigeria Union of Electricity Employees have a great responsibility and moral burden to ensure that workers of Power Holding Company of Nigeria, the latest public corporation that is about to be privatized do not undergo this sort of traumatic situation by working tenaciously and assiduously to ensure that all worker issues are resolved before the completion of the process. This is topical because in as much as it affects both men and women equally, women usually suffer more

In many countries, majorities of victims of employment discrimination are often women do appear uneager to take up their cases or draw attention to their situation. This has been adduced to reasons often connected with their disadvantaged social position, lack of



access to legal assistance, fear of reprisal or distrust of the organizational/ judicial system. The Solidarity center AFI-CIO in its 2008 Report Justice for all a guide to workers rights in a global economy seems to collaborate this view point with its declaration that women are often the first to lose their formal jobs under economic policies designed to promote growth. In the United Kingdom, a recent report by the Equal Opportunities Commission states that 30,000 women each year lose their jobs because of their pregnancy, and only 3 per cent of those who experience a problem lodge a claim at an employment tribunal Economic reforms that cut government spending and public-sector employment hit hard in the education and healthcare sectors—where many women are employed. Although, this trend looks as if it is changing, more women need to speak up against perceived injustices and infractions in the workplace. Virile unions with active women in leadership positions can actually pick up the gauntlet for oppressed women in the workplace.

Trade Unions should always endeavor to capitalize on and fully maximize its social capital to advance the interests of their members. The existence of a countervailing power that is inherent in a trade union makes it a political institution. Thus jostling for the control of and competitive edge in the workplace is what politics is all about. Therefore, as a key stakeholder in the industry with a huge percentage of women workers, unions cannot afford to take the back seat in employment relations and watch as events unfold in the workplace. They must be ready and willing to utilize all their resources and play active roles and parts for the overall wellbeing and interests of their members. The proliferation of Free trade agreements, Export processing zones, Free trade zones etc. is another big issue for trade unions worldwide. According to ACILS (2008), 116 countries house 3,000 EPZs employing more than 67 million workers—30 million in China alone—the vast majority of whom are young, mostly poor women. For instance, Kuye (2013) asserted at a forum that investments in Nigeria's viable free trade areas amounted to almost \$10 Billion. Massive numbers of women in developing countries are currently working in Export Processing Zones (EPZs) areas where labour and environmental standards may be relaxed or eliminated in order to attract foreign investors, and workers have been restrained from joining unions, exercising their rights to strike and bargain collectively etc. often as part of free trade agreements. Even where labour laws extend to these zones, they are often unenforced, leaving women exposed to low wages and poor conditions etc.

Not deterred by limited union rights, workers have increasingly mobilized for improved conditions. In Honduras, for example, after a two-year campaign, a maquila union was able to secure a collective bargaining agreement for workers at the Yoo Yang garment factory in La Lima, with provisions for an expansion of medical benefits, increased maternity leave, education scholarships and other benefits. But according to the state of trade unionism and industrial relations practice in Nigeria's Export Processing Zones, the report of an International Trade Union Confederation-Nigeria Labour Congress research project in January 2011, there seems to be a tendency to avoid female labour as much as possible. It is inferred that this has to do with granting maternity leave. Employers also tend to discriminate against female employment with a greater preponderance of male workers. Due to the growing prominence being placed on women issues globally and the need to address problems of workplace inequity brought about as a result of mounting economic restructuring and heightened global competition, Governments, Workers' organizations and employers all over the world are jointly or individually developing initiatives and schemes that are responsive to the peculiar needs of women workers.

For instance, Jolivet and Lee (2004) noted that in Australia a distributor of medical products with a third of its workforce comprising women gave employees breaks during the day, part-time work and administrative assistance to workers who were not computer literate. As a result, the company did not have staff turnover in two years. Industrial unions in Nigeria have also established women's wings and committees, etc. which do not seem to be making the desired impacts. ILO(2007)noted that In Japan, the revised Equal Employment Opportunity Law provides that, as of 1 April 2007, both women and men shall be protected from sexual harassment, and requires employers to take workplace measures to address it. A study of collective agreements in Italy found numerous company day-care facilities, especially in large organizations with high proportions of women workers, such as hospitals, call centres and insurance companies (EUROFOUND, 2006: 37).Even though the argument for more women in executive positions is quite tenable and auspicious, but women themselves need to organize and mobilize themselves to assume more leadership posts and responsibilities. In the same vein, Unions need to have more women friendly programs and policies and also canvass for more pro women measures in the workplace

There has been a gradual increase in rampant cases of direct employment discrimination in some job advertisement stating that persons above a certain age, persons of particular sex etc. need not apply. These often disqualify women who constitute a huge chunk of prospective employees from applying and from gainful employment. Related to this is a striking feature of the emerging world of work-- no matter the socioeconomic dynamism and development of a country , certain groups have consistently occupied the lowest rungs of the occupational and pay ladder i.e women, minorities, migrants. It has to be expressed also that the concentration of Female migrant workers, regardless of their skill levels in "3D" jobs (dirty, dangerous and degrading) where protection is either nonexistent or inadequate and making them more susceptible to exploitation and unequal treatment than migrant men (e.g. Agricultural, Commercial Sex and Domestic work) (ILO, 2004) is quite antithetical to gender equality, social justice, ILO's decent work agenda and socio-economic development worldwide. Infact, it limits and subjugates the potentials of women. Throughout the globe there is a gradual increase in workplace policies and expansion of opportunities for women with family responsibilities through measures such as affordable and reliable childcare facilities, childcare arrangements, flexible work, paternity and parental leave to enhance female labour participation, retain mothers in the labor market, and enable married fathers to reconcile paid work with family duties. Male workers in MTN Nigeria are entitled to three days paternity leave despite the fact that they are not unionized. There is a also an increase in the number of organizations with provide crèches for workers with babies. Female executives of Unions should advocate that these measures should be part of the union bargaining agenda so that they can be implemented in Nigerian workplaces.

The probability of continuous privatization and commercialization in the public sector is quite high, so unions in the public corporations in the petroleum, power , education, maritime sector etc must be futuristic and proactive in their planning, strategizing

and approach. They should thoroughly examine and analyze and fashion out appropriate responses to four great concerns that may determine their relevance and future

- Reduction in numerical strength of the union through eventual or inevitable large scale disengagement of members
- Massive loss of revenue by the union through the cessation of accruable check off dues from sacked workers
- Potential impact of the reform process on the unions and employees of the public corporations employees and finally the
- Post Reform State/Continuous existence or vibrancy of the union

This is very important because these unions need to take a cue from the experience of Maritime Workers Union of Nigeria,(MWUN) during the Port Reforms. Nted (2013) warned against the plan to further privatize the remaining functions of Nigeria Ports Authority, NPA, lamenting that the union was yet to recover from the effects of previous exercise done between 2001 and 2012 when the operational services of Nigerian ports Authority, (NPA), were concessioned to private operators. According to him; “the exercise rendered over 5,000 direct employees of NPA jobless, about 1 0,000 dockworkers were retrenched and over 3,000 employees of shipping companies who had their operational base in the concessioned areas were declared redundant. In effect over 18,000 Nigerians lost their sources of regular livelihood.

## 9. Conclusion

The current developments in the world of work no doubt pose daunting challenges for tripartite partners. Since women constitute the bulk of the global workforce, they are feeling the negative impacts of these trends more than their male counterparts. In this regard, Trade unions should advocate for the inclusion of strategic women issues on their policy schema and bargaining agenda. In addition to striving to guarantee the fundamental rights of women in the workplace, unions should seek to maximize, retain and attract female union membership by examining and tackling all workplace issues which are detrimental to harnessing the potentials of women especially in Nigeria with deplorable socio-economic and political indices that reveal the worsening condition of women at work (NBS, 2008)

The women Leaders in conjunction with the National Executives of all the trade unions can set the pace in this regard by setting inimitable precedents for women trade unionists and aspiring female union leaders through protecting and advancing the interests and welfare of female employees. Most Nigerian Unions have women’s wings etc, but they do not seem to be doing enough. The truth is that by effectively increasing the descriptive and substantive representation of women in unions at all levels, the potential for change in workplace practices—and therefore in outcomes--towards the empowering women can be better realized; thereby promoting more democratic, just and prosperous organizations with positive environments to actualize the aspirations of women workers. But it is essential that women should strive to organize, train and mobilize themselves to strategically assume and judiciously optimize union leadership posts and responsibilities for the collective benefit of all women in the world of work.

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