

Casualisation of Labour in Cement Company of Northern Nigeria Plc, Sokoto-Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The paper examined the reasons for the casualisation of labour at the Cement Company of Northern Nigeria, Sokoto. In Nigeria, most private enterprises are profit-oriented and thus had an exploitative motive in demining the labour rights of most staff into contractual/casual employment with minimum benefits attached. The exploitative nature exerted against casual staff by such sectors as the Sokoto Cement Company reflects on the risky and stringent working conditions attached to deprivation in certain social benefits, allowances and social security of jobs (especially to staff belonging to the junior cadre). The study's objective was to examine the reasons for the casualisation of labour in CCNN. The neoliberal theory was used as a theoretical guide to the study. A qualitative data collection method was employed using focus group discussion and critical informant interview guides as data collection instruments. Sixty-eight casual workers and three management staff were purposively selected. The data were analysed using content analyses. The findings from the study revealed that unemployment and the drive to cut down costs and maximize profits were some of the reasons for casualization in CCNN. The study recommends that governments put more effort into creating job opportunities for youths and other labour force. Appropriate government agencies should enforce government policies relating to the period in which one can serve as a casual worker in any organization.

Keywords: Casualisation; Cement Company; Exploitation; Labour; Unemployment

INTRODUCTION

Before the emergence of capitalism about 200 years ago, work was seen as activities for human needs and survival or subsistence (Selwyn, 2019). It is only in the recent past that work became synonymous with regular paid employment. The present conception of work is a modern social construction, the product of specific historical conditions denoted by work. During the pre-capitalist era, the main kinds of work were all non-industrial and differed based on gender, age and class specialization culminating in some social groups. Unlike in capitalist societies, the occupational profession was very small in the earliest civilisations. Global investigations on the development of short work and its possible effect on the individual have been hampered by the nonappearance of a generally acknowledged jargon and definition (Gallagher & McLean Parks, 2001; Kalleberg, 2000). The International Labour Organization (ILO) announced in Philadelphia,

United States of America, in 1998 that its members must respect, promote, and implement the principles underlying fundamental labour rights in good faith. Although not binding in international law, this proclamation on fundamental rights at work emphasises that all member nations, whether they have signed the relevant ILO Conventions, must respect, promote, and realize the basic principles of good faith.

The word casualisation is generally considered inseparable from casual (G. Standing, 2008). Think about the essential utilization of easygoing wear instead of formal clothing. The picture here is "you choose", an absence of normalization, forced order, and control by someone in power. The drawback of casualisation is capriciousness, being available to somebody no matter what, unreliable, needy, disparaged etc. This two-sided character is an admonition to be cautious about contending that an increment in everyday work is a pointer to crumbling work markets. It very well may be, or it may not, even though we might be slanted to say it would.

Even though precarious work is spreading worldwide, it has different characteristics in each national setting, reflecting patterns of boundary drawing, legal frameworks, and histories of collective action, (Mosoetsa & Stillerman, 2016). It should be noted that the nature of such working conditions varies in the Global South and the Global North. While casual workers in the latter are highly revered and undergo stress-free duties, everyday workers in the former are hard to experience labour-intensive jobs with less take-home. In addition to the above, there is a gender dimension like contract staffing. Such prevalence is visibly seen in the Global South, where females are assigned administrative duties while males are deployed to labour-intensive jobs with lesser pay than females. The Global North could be blamed for its genesis of casual or seasonal employment, especially in extending the exploitative strategy of looking for cheap labour.

Along these lines, casualisation is part of another work administration period. It is a time which fits numerous labourers into the requirements of creation and administration arrangement by offering, without a doubt, exceptionally restricted decisions to labourers. More limited hours are generally connected with lower pay and lower gifted work.

Okafor (2007) argues that continuous trade liberation led to the growth of the informal sectors which engage workers in unfair labour practices like casual employment in unfavourable working conditions. He added that the inability of labour to flow to other work organizations for good standards of living as part of globalisation worsened the labour situation. Other causes of casualization include globalization and unemployment. Globalization came with the deregulation of both the product and labour markets and promoted outsourcing, which is seen as one of the causes of casualization. Where an employer outsources labour, fewer numbers of permanent employees are needed. Okafor (2007) observed that globalisation has affected jobs in many ways. He argued that in some cases, it had created jobs, while in some, the condition of employment has been precarious. The idea is to cut the number of permanent employees and replace them with casuals. Bayo (2019) observed that the high level of unemployment and abundance or excess supply of labour also plays a significant role in fuelling casualization; this example results partly from the maltreatment of workers, as employers believe that there will always be people willing to work irrespective of the conditions. There is also the desperate attitude of potential employees to get jobs at any cost. Kalleberg (1999) observed that in advanced economies, due to globalisation, many enterprises have resorted to the engagement of contract labour, part-time work, temporary work etc., to cut costs and remain competitive in the global market. In addition, employers argue that demographic changes influence the growth of casualisation in the composition of the labour force.

Many women want to work part-time to combine family care and work; therefore, the changing economic conditions, such as greater instability and uncertainty, necessitated casualization. The Nigerian Labor Law defines a worker as "anyone who has signed a contract with or works under a contract with an employer, whether the contract is manual or paperwork, express or implied, oral or written, or whether it is a contract with the employer in person performs any work or labour service or contract" (Ogwu, 2020). This definition needs to recognise casual workers. The reason may be that the current Labour Act was done in 1971 when nonstandard work was outside the Nigerian industrial relations environment. Consequently, the casual worker does not fall within the purview of the protection and rights available to permanent employees covered by the Labour Act. Therefore, this form of employment is characterised by instability, lack of benefits, the right to organise, and collective bargaining. Many loopholes in the labour law also encourage temporary workers, allowing employers to continue to hire temporary workers to fill fixed positions (Bayo, 2019). For example, while labour laws may cover almost all workers, enforcement has severe challenges. The government must have the will to enforce labour laws to ensure that workers enjoy the protection granted by law (Bamidele, 2014). The implication is that workers will continue to remain casual because they cannot afford to give casual workers permanent employment; the part of workers will continue to stay casual workers because they need to earn a living and cater for their families.

According to information from the Cement Company of Northern Nigeria Plc brochure (2010), CCNN was founded by the then Premier of Northern Region, Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto. It was incorporated in 1962 and commenced production in 1967 with an initial installed capacity of 100,000 tonnes once a year, using the wet production process at the Kalambaina plant. Ohimain (2014) noted that the necessity to satisfy the increasing demand for cement necessitated the expansion of the plant with the commissioning of a second line with an installed capacity of 500,000 tonnes once a year in 1985. After that, in 1986, the primary line was packed up thanks to its uneconomic mode of operation, thus leaving the plant with a rated output of 500,000 tonnes once a year.

Narrowing the problem of casualisation of labour down to Nigeria, most private enterprises hardly offer tenure employment to individuals; this is unconnected to the profit-oriented motive and minimal loss. Agencies/sectors like commercial Banks and most companies are preferential in employing casual workers, which guarantees them the opportunity to offer minimal payments (devoid of necessary allowances) and disengage such staff at any given moment. In Sokoto State, where this paper is focused, casual employment is rife, especially in the banking sector (Dabai & Novel, 2022). Other private industries equally adopt the system of contract staffing, and the CCNN is not an exception. In the CCNN, the brunt of such casualisation of labour is mainly felt by individuals who engaged in hard-earned struggle during the administrative staff wallow in influence. Against this background, the study examined the causes of everyday work in the Cement Company of Northern Nigeria Plc, Sokoto.

METHODOLOGY

The population of the study was the entire staff of the Cement Company of Northern Nigeria, Sokoto, which had a total population of 368 staff. For this study, the target population included all casual staff of CCNN. As of 31st December 2014, CCNN had -seventy-two (72) casual staff and some management staff members.

A qualitative method was employed in conducting the study. This was used through focus group discussions and key informant interviews. The focus group discussions were carried out with 68 casual staff (who were all male and fell within the age category of 20-45 years) under the guidance of the researcher; discussions were held in natural settings and conducted under a permissive and -non-judgmental atmosphere. All participants were male due to the absence of the female category of casual staff in CCNN. The venue was quiet, spacious enough and comfortably accommodated all participants, circular sitting formation was used. This facilitated face-to-face contact among discussants and minimised perceived differences between them and us (discussants and moderators/note-takers). An interview guide was designed in line with the objectives of the study. The researcher used an audio recorder to record all the conversations. Also, one research assistant was employed and trained as a note taker who assisted the researcher in taking notes of the discussions. The study also used key informant interviews (KII) to generate the data; the researcher chose respondents from the management staff who have relevant information regarding the topic of the study and engaged them in a face to face interactions with a range of issues on allowances, loans/advances, benefits, salary/wages, hours of work, freedom of association, an opportunity for personal growth, job security, etc. this enabled better understanding and ability of the respondents to express more on answering the research questions.

Content analysis was employed in analysing the info collected. Content analysis may be a research method for determining the existence of specific words, topics, or concepts in qualitative data. Using content analysis, researchers can quantify and analyze the presence, meanings, and relationships of terms, themes, or concepts. The data were transcribed by converting recorded conversations into written form; the data were studied and linked with analytic notes. The researcher familiarised himself by reading the transcripts of the data collected repeatedly to be familiar with the data collected from the field. The data were categorised into sub-themes; several categories fell under each theme according to research objectives. Therefore, the data collected were arranged according to each theme and presented in a narrative form (through verbatim quotations) based on each research objective, sub-merged and interpreted based on sub-themes. The analysis then followed these themes, such as conditions of casual labourers (number of hours of work, income received, benefits provided, freedom of association, job security, the opportunity for personal growth, etc.); Causes of casualisation of labour (means of living, lack of higher qualification, unemployment, cheap labour, cost minimisation, profit maximisation, etc.); effects of casual work on the casual workers (downward pressure on working conditions of the employee, low standard of living, etc.) one after the other and presented the findings following the objectives of the study (Tinuke, 2012)

Nature and Trends of Casualisation in Nigeria

Casualisation of employment may be a significant part of that group of employment arrangements collectively referred to as nonstandard, contingent, atypical, precarious, and alternative work arrangements in international labour law (Kalleberg, 2000). Casualisation has created concerns for workers and trade unions, especially in Nigeria. Job security, Social Security, terminal benefits, and minimum labour conditions are issues often related to casualisation. Scholars have argued that the new sorts of work arrangements have led to a rise in the prospects of a fall in labour standards, particularly in developing nations like Nigeria (Banks, 2006). On scrutiny, one can observe that labour standards are being compromised by most firms involved in casualisation. Such measures

include the proper to make or belong to a union, the right to negotiation, poor working conditions etc. The casualisation of employment is growing alarmingly (Bamidele, 2014).

More and more workers in permanent employment are losing their jobs and are re-employed as casual/contract workers or have been replaced by casual or contract workers. Simple work, which is supposed to be a form of temporary employment, has acquired permanent employment status in Nigeria without the statutory benefits associated with that status. It must be noted that this is the prevalent form of employment in the private sector; however, the practice has crept into the public sector (Bamidele, 2014). Currently, casual workers work for many years without promotion and necessary entitlements. Sometimes, they do what average employees should but are not compensated for doing such jobs (Bamidele, 2014). Nigerian Labour Laws do not regulate the terms and conditions of casual employment of workers because their status is not defined, and no provisions are made to hold the terms and conditions of their work (Tinuke, 2012). This might be the main reason for their continuous exploitation. Employers use the casualisation of the labour force as an effective means of reducing costs, maximizing profit and de-unionizing the workforce. The justification for not regularising the casual workers after working for over three months is that there is no vacancy for permanent jobs. Fajana (2005) noted that giving accurate statistics about the number of casual workers in Nigeria takes much work. This is because no adequate official statistics show the extent and trends of casualization.

Animashaun (2007) asserts that some organizations in Nigeria have been reported to have up to 60-90 per cent of their workers as casual employees. This is alarming on the part of the country's economy, and it shows a high unemployment rate. Tinuke (2012) also asserts that the Nigerian Labour Act does not define casualisation or provide a legal framework for regulating the terms and conditions of their work arrangement. However, Section 7(1) of the Act provides that a worker should only be employed for up to three months without regularising such employment. After three months, every worker, including casual workers' career, must be regularised by the employer. This can be done by giving a written statement that indicates the terms and conditions of the work, the nature of the work and the date when the contract expires.

Owoseye and Onwe (2009) noted that despite the supply in Section 17 (e) of the Constitution, which guarantees "equal pay for equal work without discrimination on account of sex, or the other ground whatsoever, the bias in pay between permanent and casual employees persists. Many companies do not have records of their casual employees to evade the law. Tinuke (2012) noted that industries dismiss casual and subcontracted workers more quickly than permanent workers; they find it easier to rent and ignore them at their wish. This is often a mechanism to evade the legal provisions concerning the hiring and dismissal of permanent employees. Bodibe (2007) notes that some casual workers work for seven days and obtain an hour's break. This is often, indeed, another sort of slavery in disguise.

Trade liberalization has forced enterprises in Nigeria to scale back their staff strength and replace them with casual workers to chop production costs and remain competitive. Aladekomo (2004) indicated that casualisation as a predominant employment practice in Nigeria was occasioned by the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programmes, which eventually led to the downsizing and mass retrenchment of skilled people, particularly within the urban centres and resulted in numerous cases of unemployment. Many retrenched workers whose status cuts across graduates and non-graduates engaged themselves in several jobs along the streets with little or no pay (Tinuke, 2012). This practice continued and gradually became popular as employers saw it as a cheap means of getting work done. The lesson is that the character and trend of casualisation

in Nigeria may be a reflection of the failure of both public and personal sectors to implement the policy on regularization of casual workers' employment contracts which states that not later than three months after the start of a worker's period of employment, the employer shall give the worker a written statement/contract specifying the character of the utilization, any terms and conditions concerning hours of labor, holiday and holiday pay among others.

DATA ANALYSIS

The paper analysed the reasons for engaging in casual work by casual workers of CCNN and the reason for employing casual workers by the management of CCNN. The CCNN was formerly a publicly owned company managed by the Federal Government, and the government bankrolls employees' salaries with substantive employment status. Under the privatization and commercialization program in 1992, the Federal Government disinvested about 20% of its holding in the company and sold it to the Nigerian public. During the privatization policy of the Federal Government of Nigeria, the Cement Company of Nigeria Plc was earmarked as one of the companies to be fully privatized. In July 2000, therefore, public bidding for the company was conducted, and Scancem International ANS of Norway, a member of the Heidelberg Cement group, was appointed as the company's core investor and technical partner. Following strategic reorientation, Heidelberg Cement Group divested its CCNN shares in March 2008. In 2009, BUA Group acquired the CCNN (Sokoto State) and incorporated it into BUA Cement. Since the company is privately owned and profit-oriented, some staff were relieved while others were employed on a contractual basis in the junior staff cadre. Until the time of generating data for the study, out of the 368 total staff of the CCNN, only 72 (which is equivalent to 20%) of the staff were casual staff, and all were males. These males mainly were youths within the age bracket 20-45 years, with few individuals of up to 50 years. These casual workers were usually deployed in complex labour jobs, so no female was employed. At the same time, tenure staff are engaged in most administrative positions.

The responses from the inquiry on causes of casualization of labour revealed that limited job opportunities, earning a living, profit and cutting the cost of production are the significant causes of casualization of labour in CCNN. This was revealed by one of the discussants in the focused group discussions:

The reason I joined this casual work is the lack of permanent job opportunities. Before I was a commercial motorcycle operator, I spent nine years doing the job and later I applied for this job and I got it.

Similarly, the responses indicated that the workers accepted everyday work because of inadequate job opportunities, as revealed by another respondent:

I joined this work because there are no job opportunities, so we must join. If there is a job opportunity, there is no way I can work as a casual labourer.

The responses from the Key Informant Interview conducted with the Human Resources Officer also revealed that lack of job opportunities was the sole responsibility for everyday work.

When there is no job in the country, what do you expect? Though you find out many of the casual workers are HND, Diploma and NCE holders and are still casual labourers, and if there is work, they will not come and become casual labourers.

Also, similar responses gathered revealed that casual labourers accepted casual work just because they want to earn a means of livelihood, as shown by one of the respondents as follows:

I joined this work just to earn a living, to get what I cater for myself, my children and my family my children. There is no progress with this job except for the fact that it gives us a means of living

Another respondent further explained that he joined casual work because he lost his business.

I joined casual work because I lost my business; I woke up one time and discover fire razed all my shop, so I joined to earn a living because there is nothing to do.

Other respondents also posited that the lack of job opportunities made them join casual work, as revealed below:

I joined casual work because there is no job opportunity, so it is necessary for us to join and I have already reached 15 years doing this, there is no achievement and we don't have any left throughout the years and we are not entitled to any other benefit from the company, but all working materials are given to us by the company. Apart from this, nothing else except our salary.

The researcher also observed that the reasons for casualization were to earn a living and lack of job opportunities. The sole aim of employing casual labourers by the management of CCNN was to cut down the cost of production and increase profit. This was indicated by one of the management staff below:

Ok, I know that there are a lot of reasons for casualisation, but for the Company was to cut down the cost and increase profit. Casualisation of labour enables the Company to reduce the cost of production and thereby increase profit; it is cheaper to higher casual workers than permanent staff.

Similarly, another management staff member revealed that employing casual staff was cheaper than hiring permanent staff. This is indicated below:

Casual labourers have limited entitlement if any, limited benefits and are relatively cheaper to hire. You can as well retrench them whenever the need arises to reduce cost and maximise profit. This is why the casualisation of labour is on the increase.

Therefore, from the casual labourer's point of view, the leading causes of casualisation of labour in CCNN were to earn a means of livelihood, inability to get a permanent appointment, and lack of qualification, among others. While from the management's point of view, the reasons for employing casual labourers are cheap labour, cost minimization, profit maximization and easy retrenchment. Below, a discussion of the significant findings will follow suit to align in proving or disproving findings from the existing literature.

DISCUSSION

The paper analysed the casualisation of labour in the Cement Company of Northern Nigeria Plc, Sokoto-Nigeria. The phenomenon of casualisation has been a long-standing issue in Nigeria. In CCNN, it has been observed that the casualisation of workers was brought about by various factors, majorly by unemployment, loss of job or business and cutting down of costs by the company, which is why most of the casual workers accepted casual employment in CCNN. This explains some of the consequences of the current massive youth unemployment in the country; which subject youths to various forms of degrading or menial jobs. This corresponds to Bamidele's (2014) findings, whose work found that labour standards are being compromised by most firms involved in casualisation. Such measures include the right to form or belong to a trade union and the right to collective bargaining, poor working conditions etc. Furthermore, the paper found that loss of jobs and business constituted another factor that compels people to pick up casual employment with CCNN. This corroborates the findings of Okafor (2010) on the ground that the sudden loss of a job or business left no alternative for some respondents than to join the services of CCNN to earn a living. Another critical factor for casualising labour is minimising cost and maximising profit. The Company decided to employ casual staff to avoid spending a lot on maintaining permanent staff. So, casual staff prefer to keep their work simple to quickly determine what is given to them and when the organisation is not gaining the expected income; they can choose to disengage the casuals without any cost implication. This confirms the findings of Danesi (2012), whose work found that contract staff are used in the industry to meet short-term or part-time staffing needs and accomplish various tasks, which enhances the company's productivity at the expense of the casual workers. This was further corroborated by Tinuke (2012), noting that industries dismiss casuals and subcontracted workers more quickly than permanent workers; they find it easier to hire and ignore them at their wish. This is different with casual workers of CCNN, as some of the workers served the Company for more than fifteen years.

Casualization is also encouraged by the numerous loopholes in labour laws, allowing employers to hire casual employees to fill permanent positions continuously. For instance, while labour laws may cover almost all workers, enforcement has severe challenges. This is why Tinuke (2012) alleged that the Nigerian Labour Laws do not regulate workers' casual employment terms and conditions because their status is not defined. No provisions are made for holding the terms and conditions of their employment.

CONCLUSION

The paper analysed the casualisation of labour in the Cement Company of Northern Nigeria Plc, Sokoto-Nigeria. Casualisation, which resulted from a lack of employment opportunities, loss of jobs and business and the attempt to maximise profits by the company, has led to casuals serving for an extended period without giving permanent appointments. This usually affects and subjects

such categories of persons to degrading or menial jobs for lesser pay. In the context of the CCNN, the paper explored that most contract staff constitute individuals in the lower cadre. This category of individuals is primarily agile males subjected to complex labour jobs that shorten life expectancy and pose health challenges. Based on the following findings, the theory of Neo-liberalism was proved to be relevant on the ground that the pursuit towards ensuring most economies of the world is privatised with high demands for a profit-oriented motive. The profit-oriented explanation is the entrenching factor strengthening the casualization of labour. On this ground, the theory is considered relevant and vital to the problem in the study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Governments should put more effort into creating job opportunities for youths and other labour force. Cement Company of Northern Nigeria should employ a welfare policy for casual workers to get the best from them.

Nigeria Labour Congress and other relevant organisations/agencies should help educate, create more awareness and struggle to liberate casual workers' rights against their employer's domination and abuse. There is a need to increase the welfare package of casual workers for engaging in hard labour jobs while they are paid a few wage returns.

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APPENDIX

Matrix 1: Reasons for Casual Work

Reasons for joining	Reasons for employing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No job/unemployment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cheap labour

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Livelihood/means of living• Lack of higher qualification	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cost minimization• Profit maximization• Easy retrenchment
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