

Labour Management Relations as a Framework for Industrial Sustainability

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ABSTRACT

Work is necessary for the survival of individual employees and labour management relations aim at achieving the collective interests of employers and employees to promote productivity and industrial sustainability. The early Knights of Labour sought to protect the interest of labour as a means of enhancing industrial growth and survival because labour is the major determinant of productivity. In many countries today including Kenya, South-Africa, Norway, Nigeria among others, employees in small and medium enterprises, including most private tertiary institutions are not unionized thereby giving such employees the freedom to use the organizations as a *stepping stone* for better employment opportunities and at the detriment of industrial growth and sustainability. Since organizations are typically coalitions of interest groups, negotiation between labour and management must always receive great attention as one of the modern methods of achieving industrial harmony. Often negotiation is characterized by divergent views and the role of labour management relations becomes to promote collaboration. 200 participants took part in the study conducted through the survey research design to explain the relationship between labour management relations and industrial sustainability. Analysis through descriptive and correlation methods showed a strong positive relationship between the variables of interest. The study was not exhaustive, and further study should examine the relationship between leadership and performance. It was suggested that the accommodation principle should always be used to achieve industrial harmony and sustainability.

Keywords: *Accommodation, Negotiation, Combatants, Collaboration, Acceptance, Knights of labour, Traditionalizing.*

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Highlights of this paper

- This paper is one of the few works to establish the correlation between labour management relations and industrial sustainability.
- It emphasizes that organizations are coalitions of group interests requiring accommodation to achieve objectives.
- It explains the need for the unionization of workers in SMEs as a requirement for industrial sustainability.

1. INTRODUCTION

The industrial organization (IO) subsists where there is harmonious industrial relationship between management and labour. Porter (1980) suggests that there is need for well-developed means of identifying competitive structures in organizations. These centre on the Porterian industrial model, life cycle approaches and strategic group analysis. He explains that it cannot be enough to address only the established combatants in a particular industry but also the potential entrants or substitutes and the bargaining force of stakeholders. Specifically, labour management relations focus on ways and procedures for maintaining a satisfactory, healthy and cooperative relationship between the employees or their representatives on one hand and the management on the other, so that the pursuit of the individual and corporate interests become the concern of both parties. This is central to industrial sustainability which means that the corporate organization should survive to benefit future generations. The concept of organizational or industrial sustainability implies that the organization while satisfying the interests and expectations of the present generation should not be run to the extent of compromising the interests of the future generations. According to Emerson (2003) at the beginning of the 20th century, the working relationship between labour and management was that of outright conflict and open hostility and management remained uncompromisingly tough in its opposition to the unions. However, in recent decades, there have been some trends towards accommodation, co-operation and collaboration resulting in the formal acceptance of the union as an active partner at the workplace and a means towards industrial sustainability. For industrial sustainability to flourish the management needs the union as much as the union needs the management so as to enhance equitable distribution of economic benefits and necessary social recognition for the dignity of labour. Lack of acceptability of the union by management escalates the uncertainties workers face around the world. According to Ryder (2019) there is a lot of insecurity and uncertainty in the work environment across the globe. He emphasizes that these uncertainties and insecurities underline how fundamental the achievement of social justice is to industrial stability and sustainability and to peace, and how vital access to decent work is to the advancement of human well-being. These issues exist because the employers have the advantages of the power to withhold employment, the economic strength to withstand the pressures of a particular individual, and of better knowledge of the labour market, therefore, the employer is superior to the employee, and this often leads to conflicts at the detriment of industrial sustainability (Shearman and Burrell, 1987; Reynolds, 1994; Vinogradov and Isaksen, 2008; Vlad, 2011; Wales, 2013; Ghosal and Ye, 2015). At the time of the Industrial Revolution, the owner managers could no longer cope with the increasing number of people to be supervised. Furthermore, the employees became more aware. They resented the poor factory conditions and subsistence wages. Employers on the other hand, reacted with sacks and threats of sacks but this did not work the magic of maintaining the loyalty of workers. In view of these new challenges for the executives, there was greater need to get somebody to manage the affairs of the workers to prevent the workers' unions that had emerged, from going on strike (Mohammed, 1992). Therefore, the history of the Industrial Revolution is also about the struggle between labour and management that subsists to the present time, exemplified by such long labour disputes in Nigeria between the Academic Staff Union of Universities and the government that at least spans for 20 years between 2009 and 2019, and yet remains *suspended* and not even *resolved*

(Olayinka *et al.*, 2019). Resolving labour management disputes as fast as desirable requires negotiation. Negotiation reduces the less desirable effects of playing damaging *political games* in a bid to win or to weaken the position of the opposition or even to undermine established labour laws and existing collective agreements. Negotiation where properly handled could be a modernizing or traditionalizing tool in industrial peace or if poorly handled could be a tool of destabilization and crisis-escalation to the detriment of labour, management and society. According to (Goleman, 1998) negotiation is crucial in conflict management, and mainly involves handling difficult people and tense situations with diplomacy and tact, bringing disagreements into the open, and helping to de-escalate, encourage debate and open discussion so as to orchestrate win-win solutions. He emphasizes that the ability to read the feelings of the opposition during negotiation is critical to success and that skill at negotiation obviously matters to resolve conflicts and head off trouble to ensure peace vital to any organization.

1.1. Research Contribution

While labour is widely recognized as the main determinant of industrial productivity, it is evident from current reports that even though micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) account for over 99 percent of registered businesses in developing countries like Nigeria, the employees in such organizations are restricted from joining any trade unions. For example, Nigeria has about 41.5m MSMEs that provide employment for about 60 percent of the population without the union to protect their interests. This may be responsible for the fact that workers in such organizations often use the *exit doors* at the detriment of industrial sustainability and economic development. According to Nwaizugbo (2010) for example, only about 40 percent of the small and medium enterprise (SMEs) celebrate their 4th anniversary indicating a high mortality rate, against the expectation of the government to improve the industrial sector in Nigeria. In many countries including Kenya, South-Africa, Norway, Nigeria, among others, employees in SMEs, including private tertiary institutions are not unionized thereby giving them the liberty to use such organizations only as a *stepping stone* at the detriment of institutional and industrial sustainability. Both private and public institutions can fail due to ineffective leadership influence and management between employees' representatives and management teams. Ukeje *et al.* (2015) emphasize the need for sound labour management relations and to place greater attention on the principles that will sustain employee involvement, cordial labour management relations and other practices that would stimulate activities towards industrial sustainability. As a specific contribution in this area, this study emphasizes that a healthy process of resolving organizational disputes and encouraging the unionization of employees in SMEs including private tertiary institutions will provide the road map for maintaining stability, growth, equilibrium and industrial sustainability (Odongo and Wang, 2016; Nweze, 2019). In view of the importance of MSMEs, Kale (2019) wants the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) to continue to support them to reduce unemployment. He emphasizes that there is a need to pay more attention to micro businesses because they have the largest share of employment. They contribute a huge chunk to the GDP, and they probably have the greatest possibilities to create more jobs.

1.2. Research Problem

Since the late 1980s the United Nations (UN) has been stressing the need for sustainable development. With its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 agenda the world today is under pressure by calls for sustainability, of which labour management relations and industrial sustainability are key players. A challenge of labour management relations hinges on the issues of superiority or inferiority complex on each side. Where there is *cold* or even *zero* labour management relations practices some CEOs find the liberty to help themselves at the detriment of their corporations. For example, at the time of the last global economic meltdown it was noted that American CEOs

generally enjoyed excessively high salaries and other perquisites while in office and apparently unexplainable retirement benefits like what is called the *golden parachute* even for CEOs that thoroughly mismanaged their corporations (Osagie, 2010). Against this background, there is often the uneasiness in management circles that with the acceptance of the union, management will not be allowed the unfettered authority commensurate with its responsibilities, while labour sees the urgent need for capacity to take back the control of their lives. ILO believes that the future of work will be the result of decisions by both management and labour and the willingness to cooperate together for the achievement of decent work, social justice and peace. Therefore, the problem of this study cannot be overemphasized. As Pugh (1993) states: organizations are coalitions of interest groups in tension. Management vs Workers, Production vs Sales, Accounting vs Research and Development, among other interests. He further states that the resultant organization is a particular balance of forces which had been hammered out over a period of time and which are continually subject to minor modifications through hierarchically initiated adjustments and cross-group negotiations. Negotiations can be less costly in terms of the basic premises on which the radical view of the organization builds and to save the organization from becoming a battlefield between management and labour (Morgan, 1993). To this extent, Onwe (2014) holds that management decisions and actions in the management of labour can only be fully appreciated only if it is recognized that such decisions and actions result from interaction between constraints and choices. Also, often the problems of labour and management escalates because of the unwillingness or inability of management in both the private and public sectors of the economy to fully implement agreements reached between them. For example, it is believed that the ceaseless students' riots and strike actions by staff and union leaders in Nigeria are due to the lack of understanding among them. For example, it is stated that University management lacks participatory leadership influence and approach in its leadership style. Consequently, lingering industrial actions like those by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Non-Academic Staff Union (NASU) and other labour unions like Senior Staff Association of Nigeria Universities (SSANU) persist due to misunderstanding and misinformation. Such situation is even complicated by the fact that there is no formal forum for the management / leadership and employees to discuss over their mutual interests (Goleman, 1995; Pandey, 2007; Obiwuru *et al.*, 2011). Weak labour management relations can create serious problems for both unions and government. According to Abdulkareem (2019) strike is not good for the system, and he wants government, management and union to find alternatives to strike as scholars in management who should know better. For instance, non-academic staff unions in Nigerian universities are at logger heads with each other due to discrepancies in the disbursement of Earned Allowances in favour of ASUU. NASU and SSANU allege that only 20 percent of N25b released by government was given to three unions while ASUU alone took 80 percent. Therefore, members of NASU and SSANU insist that their national leadership must make a demand of N30b being part-payment of arrears of Earned Allowances owed to members between 2009 and 2016 (Ayewoh, 2019).

1.3. Research Significance

There are not many reports in this area that seems less glamorous to researchers despite its importance to the question of decent work and human well-being. The present study may not fill the gap but it is significant to state that peaceful and stable labour management relations climate is critical to industrial sustainability. It is now recognized that union's acceptance by management can pave the way for co-operative co-existence, and industrial sustainability. Good labour management relations have given rise to the paradigm shift whereby the CEO with the help of a few trusted colleagues cannot suppress the interest of labour at the detriment of the organization.

1.4. Research Objective

This research was designed to explore the relationship between labour management relations (LMR) and industrial sustainability (INS).

1.5. Research Questions

1. Is positive leadership influence needed in industrial sustainability?
2. Does collaboration help in labour management relations?
3. Can management use accommodation to the benefit of the organization?
4. Is negotiation part of labour management relations approach?
5. Does conflict promote industrial sustainability?

1.6. Hypothesis

To achieve the objective of this study the following hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.01 level of significance.

Ho: There is no relationship between labour management relations and industrial sustainability.

Hi: There is a relationship between labour management relations and industrial sustainability.

1.7. Conceptual Framework

SSA conceptual framework is the structure of the study. It shows the principal variables and their hypothesized relationships with the problem of the study. It is often stated in a schematic model. Models are frequently used in research to explain, clarify and define issues that would otherwise be buried in an excess of words (Cleary, 1992). The conceptual framework for this study is shown in Figure 1.

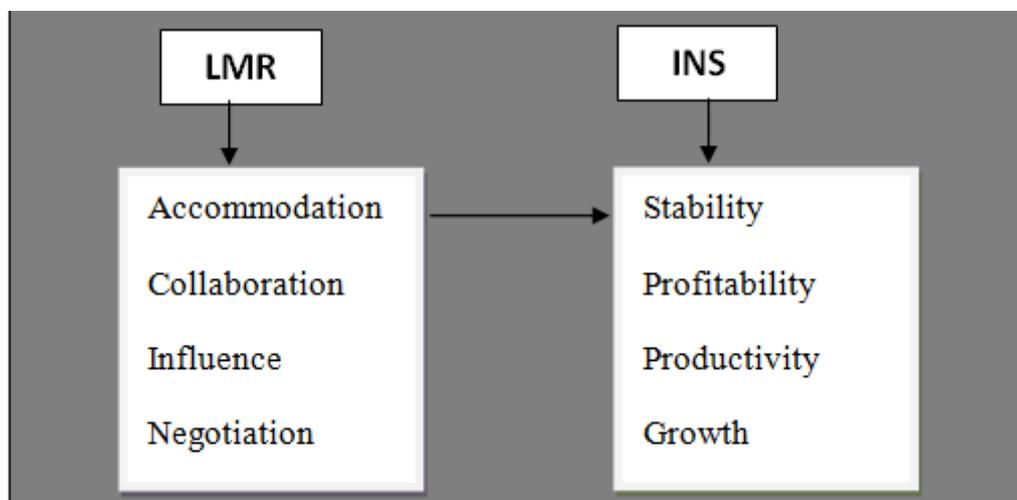


Figure-1. Labour management relations and industrial sustainability model.

Source: Author designed (2019).

Negotiation is a major instrument in labour management relations because power interactions among key players are important for industrial change and sustainability. According to Quinn (1993) balance of interest between top management and dominant coalition gives rise to comfort levels leading to necessary agreements. He opines that adjustments require constant negotiations and implies bargains within the leadership group for balancing the different interests in the coalitions. Positive leadership influence promotes sound labour management relations in terms of the acceptability of negotiations. According to Goleman (1998) some organizations are more

politically oriented than performance oriented and this must be recognized during negotiations to achieve the desired result through the skill of influence. He posits that charm and social polish in themselves do not add up to competence at influence, social skills in the service of oneself, and to the detriment of the group as a whole often become a charade. According to him, the power of influence competence is socialized and harmonious with the collective goal rather than exclusively for self-fish gain of few people. In terms of industrial sustainability, in an analysis of over 300 organizations, he did not find that the best performers pursue their own status, prestige, or gain at the expense of others or of the organizations. The *accommodation principle* is characterized by the preparedness and acceptance by both management and labour to tolerate and accommodate each other and to minimize unnecessary oppositions, whereby management becomes willing to meet labour halfway. Through co-operation management and labour move away from a position of strife, conflict, intolerance and antagonism to the arena of partnership and co-existence necessary for industrial stability and sustainability (Strydom, 2015). Ukeje *et al.* (2015) posit that while power implies the ability to exert influence and change behavior effective leadership influence encompasses the process of accomplishing goals with or through people (Okene, 2004; Okpata and Ukeje, 2010; Ige *et al.*, 2011; Napathorn and Chanprateep, 2011; Ojonemi *et al.*, 2013; Olowookere and Elegbeleye, 2013; Ugoani, 2015).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Armstrong (2004) suggests that labour management relations processes consist of the approaches and methods adopted by management to deal with employees either collectively through their trade unions or individually. This is often based on the organization's articulated or implied labour policies as well as the prevailing industrial relations processes that guide them. A major technique in the process is negotiation. Negotiation takes place when two parties to a dispute meet to reach an agreement. Negotiation is characterized by divergent views and become a war game in the sense that both parties try to win. The role of good labour management relations becomes to promote collaboration and harmonious spirit to achieve a win-win outcome in the heat of the battle. Labour management relations aims at collaborative arrangements which are almost always the result of employer's initiatives, but both employers and unions seem satisfied with them. They facilitate greater flexibility, more multi-skilling, removal of demarcations and improvements in quality (Guest, 2001). In an organization with dispersed power, good negotiation must recognize that the key figure is the one who can manage coalitions effectively because each player has a different level of power determined by his or her information base, organizational position and personal capacity and credibility (Quinn, 1993). Regardless of the leadership approach in an organization, management always depends on an ability to read developing situations. Therefore, management tries to analyze interests, understand conflict and explore power relations so that situations can be brought under a measure of control. According to Morgan (1993) disputes leading to head-on clashes between management and unions require a keen ability to discourage a winner takes all or fight-to-the death attitude and make compromise to avoid painful outcomes such as unemployment or bankruptcy of the organization. Milkovich and Boudreau (1997) opine that although labour disputes such as strikes and demonstrations are common, a more positive approach to contain them is collaboration in which management attempts to improve labour management relations through joint unions/management committees, employee involvements and giving union leaders input into strategic business decisions. In the last dozen of years it is recognized that the union is the other focal organization in effective collective bargaining relationships. Therefore, where union and management interact at the right time, union and management attitude toward each other can positively affect the degree of peace and effectiveness that can exist in labour management relations (Ivancevich, 2001). Noe *et al.* (2004) state that labour unions represent worker

interests and the collective bargaining process provides a way to manage the conflict. In other words, through systems for hearing complaints and negotiating labour contracts, unions and management resolve conflicts between employers and employees. Successful business does not survive in a vacuum rather they depend and maneuver through many environmental factors, including industrial unions. According to [Torrington et al. \(2005\)](#) management always needs the collective consent of its employees; it also needs a mandate to manage. They explain that the most sustainable organizations will be the ones that avoid deterioration in labour management relations. During the 19th century for example, the defunct Knights of Labour tried to protect the interest of workers and also to raise productivity. It was recognized that to a large extent, any organization is a reflection of its leadership. It was also recognized that groups were influential in organizational success. According to [Bambrick \(1972\)](#) early unions did not engage in a collective bargaining but rather gave employers conditions to meet without which there would be no work. These laid the ground for labour management relations that often led to accommodation and acceptable work conditions. Even though the traditional understanding of labour management relations is that the two parties are adversaries, meaning that each side is competing to win at the expense of the other, the best practice suggests that collaboration between labour and management may feature employee involvement in decision-making, self-managing employee teams, labour-management problem-solving teams, broadly defined jobs, and sharing financial gains and business information with employees and resulting to a win-win solution. [Fashoyin \(2007\)](#) argues that collective bargaining is a standard-setting machinery which communicates an important source of regulation governing wages, salaries and other employment conditions mutually agreed upon between labour and management and in conformity with public policy. He asserts that in several work situations, collective bargaining has become the guiding principle of labour management relations. A central aim of labour management relations is to help in connecting conducive organizational climate to enhance productivity, enterprise growth and sustainability. For example, according to [Njoku \(2017\)](#) one of the major objectives of industrial relations is to reduce, control or avoid conflict or dispute, if possible in an organization, because it does not help the production of goods and service delivery ([Nidumolu et al., 2009](#); [Eccles et al., 2011](#); [Blaga, 2013](#)). According to [Razi et al. \(2012\)](#) labour management relations are the interacting relationship between labour and management. They see management of labour management relations as a complex phenomenon since it involves the human element, and therefore requires collaboration. They opine that collaboration greatly enhances an organization's chances of success. [Basorun \(2019\)](#) states that in the last 100 years since 1919 when it was created ILO have promoted nine pillars that have helped in ensuring cohesion in the world of work globally and also very important in the life of human beings. He stresses that with collaboration between employers and employees, a win-win position that finds no fault, safe work environment, workers would put in their best when they realize that they would be cared for in case of industrial or occupational injuries. Labour management relations are critical to wedge the high rate of employees leaving at the detriment of industrial sustainability in developing countries like Nigeria dominated by MSMEs ([Law, 1994](#); [Ibeenwo, 2015](#); [Ugoani and Ibeenwo, 2015](#); [Ugoani, 2016](#)).

2.1. Research Methodology

Research methodology is the process of arriving at dependable solutions to problems through planned and systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of data ([Onwe, 2003](#)).

2.2. Research Design

Research design is the structure, program and strategy upon which hypotheses are evaluated. The survey research design was adopted for this study. This method involves the administration of structured questionnaire

copies to a cross-section of respondents. The survey method seeks to obtain the trend of the situation as they appear as at the period of the research, and also focuses on the accurate description of the variables associated with the problem of the study (Asika, 2004; Nworuh, 2004).

2.3. Data Sources

Data for this study were obtained from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through the use of structured questionnaire and oral face-to-face interview by the researcher who administered the questionnaire copies on the respondents. Secondary data were obtained from books, journals, newspaper reports, government reports, review of relevant literature, among others. According to Fink (1998) a literature review is a systematic, explicit, and reproducible design for identifying, evaluating and interpreting the existing body of recorded documents. It summarizes existing research by identifying patterns, themes and issues, and helps to identify the conceptual content of the field of study, and can contribute to theory development (Meredith, 1993).

2.4. Population, Sample and Size

The population of the study composed of the people in Nigeria, and the sample was selected through the judgmental method. The sample size was determined by the sample ratio concept (Obodoeze, 1996).

2.5. Data Collection Method

A researcher designed 5-point Likert-type instrument titled “Labour Management Relations Questionnaire (LMRQ) and adapted from the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) was used to generate primary data. The reliability and validity of MSQ has already been confirmed by earlier scholars. The questionnaire copies were personally administered by the researcher because of the critical nature of the study. The MSQ was adapted because for most people, job satisfaction is one of several causes of good performance and industrial sustainability (Nelson and Quick, 2003).

Table-1. Profile of respondents (n = 200).

S/N	Description	Category	Total	Percentage
1	Gender	a) Female	65	32.50
		b) Male	135	67.50
2	Education	a) Diplomas	55	27.50
		b) Degrees	80	40.50
		c) Others	65	32.50
3	Age	a) 18 – 35 years	70	35.00
		b) 36 – 60 years	60	30.00
		c) Above 61 years	70	35.00
4	Experience	a) 5 – 10 years	45	22.50
		b) 11 – 20 years	85	42.50
		c) Above 21 years	70	35.00
5	Status	a) Low	75	32.50
		b) Middle	90	45.00
		c) High	35	17.50

Source: Fieldwork (2019).

2.6. Study Area

The study was conducted in Southeast Nigeria. The area is composed of 5 states out of 36 states in Nigeria. The area host large industrial organizations (IOs) like Nigerian Breweries Plc, Guinness Nigeria Plc, and others. It is believed that the opinion of the people in the area will adequately represent the opinion of the people in Nigeria (Ezejelue et al., 2008).

2.7. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the descriptive and correlation statistical methods.

3. RESEARCH RESULT

Table-2. Respondents' perceived relationship between LMR. and INS. (n = 200).

S/N	Restatement of Research Questions	Scores		Total 1+2	Scores		Total 3+4	5 N	Total 1-5	Percentage Ratings	
		1 SA	2 A		3 SD	4 D				1+2	3+4
1	Positive leadership influence supports INS.	43	62	105	50	35	85	10	200	53	43
2	Collaboration helps in LMR and INS.	70	30	100	51	19	70	30	200	50	35
3	Accommodation principle is necessary in the interest of INS.	65	53	118	54	24	78	4	200	59	39
4	Negotiation is a good LMR approach.	80	155	135	40	20	60	5	200	68	30
5	Conflict promotes INS.	30	20	40	90	50	140	20	200	20	70

Source: Fieldwork (2019).

Table-3. Correlation analysis.

Pearson correlation	INS.	1.000			
LMR.	ACC.	0.586 *	1.000		
INS.	COL	0.350 *	0.456	1.000	
	INF.	0.531 *	0.707	0.558	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	INS.	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
	ACC	0.000	.	0.000	0.000
	COL	0.000	0.000	.	0.000
	INF.	0.000	0.000	0.000	.
N	INS.	200	200	200	200
	ACC.	200	200	200	200
	COL.	200	200	200	200
	INF.	200	200	200	200

Note: *Correlation is significant at 0.01 (1-tailed).

3.1. Discussion

A study of this nature involving human well-being has important psychological implications. Therefore, knowledgeable respondents were selected for the study. As in Table 1 32.50 percent were female, while 67.50 percent were male, with different levels of higher education, and within the ages between 18 and above 61 years. 22.50 percent had 5-10 years industrial work experience and others had above 21 years working knowledge, falling within the low, middle and high income status. At the most general level, LMR are frequently confronted with issues related to organizational change and change management processes, duplication of union activities, through the proliferation of industrial unions and some with dubious intentions but still masquerading as employees representatives, and the vexing matters of casual employment and dichotomous remuneration benefit levels. Employees usually regard the subject of change management as problems of bad organizational leadership influence on the part of the management team and this perception negatively affects output, organization citizenship behavior

(OCB), job satisfaction, and the ability to perform at optimal levels at the detriment of the organization (Mabey and Mayon-White, 1993; Ugoani, 2018;2019). From the descriptive analysis in Table 2, out of the 200 respondents 105 or about 53 percent agreed that positive leadership influence is necessary for industrial sustainability while 85 or about 43 percent denied. 10 out of the whole respondents were neutral of any choice. In the second row in Table 2, it was noted that 100 or 50 percent of the respondents agreed that collaboration is a necessary ingredient in good labour management relations and industrial sustainability. This supports the views of Razi *et al.* (2012) that management is part of labour and labour part of management and must work together for industrial peace at the work place. It was equally observed that about 59 percent of the respondents agreed that accommodation is critical for industrial success. Negotiation was rated very high at 68 percent by respondents supporting the evidence in the literature for the need for the balance of interests in organizations. At about 70 percent rejection rate the respondents denied that conflict promotes industrial sustainability. This work was conceptualized on the basis that labour management relations congruence is necessary for industrial sustainability. It embraces the principles of accommodation, collaboration, influence, and negotiation to give rise to ultimate industrial sustainability often measured by productivity and growth. From the correlation analysis in Table 3, it was proved that the major components of the independent variable are highly correlated with the dependent variable. For the accommodation (ACC) factor, $r = .586$, collaboration (COL), $r = .350$, influence (INF), $r = .531$. Correlation measures the strength and direction of relationship between two variables. It can range from -1.00 to +1.00. A correlation of +1.00 indicates that changes in one variable are always matched by changes in the others, a correlation of -1.00 indicates that increases in one variable are matched by decreases in the other, and a correlation close to zero indicates little linear relationship between two variables. The result of this study showed that the independent variables have strong positive relationship with the dependent variable. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate accepted to achieve the objective of the study. This result supports the arguments of earlier scholars including (Njoku, 2017) that labour management relations are necessary to reduce industrial conflict and pave the way for increase in production of goods and services delivery. Labour as a critical factor in sustainable development cannot be divorced from industrial sustainability. According to Akanwa (2006) labour plays a pivotal role in the development and transformation of society. Uwazie (2007) asserts that within the current conception of productivity, the role of labour as the main determinant of productivity improvement is widely appreciated. Labour management relations are closely linked to productivity and industrial sustainability in many respects. For example, according to Alugbuo (2005) an organization that needs to succeed must realize that efficiency and effectiveness, high productivity, profit maximization, stability and growth are related to industrial peace and harmony. The need for effective labour management relations and industrial sustainability cannot be overemphasized because of its importance in society. According to Uvieghara (2001) labour is defined as including trade unions, industrial relations, conditions, safety and welfare of labour, industrial disputes, prescribing a national minimum wage for the federation or any part of it, and industrial arbitrations. There is no doubt that the enforcement of collective agreements arising from these processes motivates employees for higher productivity which in turn promotes industrial sustainability. To a great extent, the result of the present study lends credence to the pluralist nature of the workplace and the need for the collectivity of workers and employers for a concerted action, as the framework for analyzing labour management relations. *It emphasizes that the basic problem of industrial relations is the prevalence of capitalism and the desire for the amelioration of the conditions of the laboring class as established by the early Knights of Labour.* For example, the institutional school of economics emphasizes the importance of negotiation and compromise among the divergent interests of labour, management, the governments, shareholders and other stakeholders. Also, the systems theory of industrial relations promoted by John Dunlop and actively supported by

Alan Flanders emphasizes the need for concern about the workplace and work community which influences the form of management and employee-organization and other union-management relations that relate to the distribution of power among the actors in an industrial system, and a reflection of the distribution of power in the larger society. Despite criticisms against the institutional school of thought and the systems theory of labour management relations, there is however, a chorus of agreement in the literature that sound labour management relations approach is a powerful tool for human motivation, perception, and attitudes and other critical variables necessary for negotiation, co-operation, collaboration accommodation and acceptance required for industrial harmony, growth and sustainability (Ugwu and Onyeneze, 2002; Akanwa and Ohiri, 2003).

3.2. Recommendations

1. Negotiations between labour and management must be done in good faith to protect the interest of all parties and promote industrial sustainability.
2. Good leadership is required at all levels of labour management relations to motivate employees to perform at optimal levels.
3. The *accommodation principle* is a veritable tool in conflict management and should always be employed for harmonious industrial climate and improved productivity.
4. There should be mutual respect between employees and employers to encourage *collaboration* necessary for industrial peace and sustainability.
5. The early *Knights of Labour* worked hard to preserve the dignity of labour and this spirit must be sustained to secure the future of work and industrial sustainability.

3.3. Scope of Further Study

Further study could examine the relationship between leadership and industrial sustainability as a way towards reducing the increasing wave of corporate failures around the world.

4. CONCLUSION

This study designed to explore the relationship between labour management relations and industrial sustainability was conceptualized on the basis that industrial harmony strives on the principles of *accommodation, collaboration, influence* and *negotiation*. Relevant literature provided evidence for this conceptualization and that industrial prosperity is better achieved within the context of cordial organizational climate. 200 respondents participated in the study conducted through the survey research design. Data collected from both primary and secondary sources were analyzed through the descriptive and correlation statistical methods and the result showed a strong positive relationship between labour management relations and industrial sustainability. This is the objective of the study.

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