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# TRADE DISPUTE, STRIKE AND SETTLEMENT: FUEL SUBSIDY REMOVAL, THE JANUARY 2012 EXPERIENCE

**Joy O. Ekwoaba[1] and Ugochukwu .U. Ikeije[2]**

[1]Department of Industrial Relations and Personnel Management, University of Lagos
[2]Department of Human Resource Management, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umuahia

**ABSTRACT:** *Nigerian economy has witnessed occasional hike in the pump price of fuel in the last three decades. This occasional increase has generated reaction from civil society especially trade unions and pressure groups in the form of outright rejection and criticism of government's policy of increase in fuel pump price. Such posture has also led to occasional trade dispute and strike action aimed at forcing government to reduce pump price of fuels with its attendant consequences on the economy of Nigeria. Thus this paper examines the case of increase in fuel-pump-price related trade disputes with special focus on the January 2012 fuel subsidy removal experience. It therefore assesses the performance of these associations (trade unions and pressure groups); reviews the issue of deregulation; and considers the possibilities of breaches being redressed or avoided entirely.*

**KEYWORDS:** Trade Dispute, Strike, Fuel Subsidy, Subsidy Removal, Pump Price, Deregulation

## INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, the relationship between industrial actors in the issues of appropriate pricing of petroleum products has always been a controversial issue that governments upon government in Nigeria has not been able to solve 42 years (Nwoga and Ani-Casimir, 2013). This situation has generated increased industrial conflict or trade disputes of various forms between organized labour and the government of Nigeria. The effects of these disputes oftentimes have spiral effects on other segments of the economy. Organized labour is represented by the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC) where the generality of workers belong. On the other hand, the employers are represented by the employers' association functioning under a parent body of Nigeria Employer's Consultative Association (NECA). The government (State) and pressure group of course functions independent of these two bodies. Both the Trade Union and their Employers' association counterparts, are full fledge entities that have secretariats, executive members, and pay membership dues to be used in the day to day running of their offices and hosting important meetings. This group of actors have set of rules, ethics and procedures that govern their mutual existence. Their tri-partite relationships function simultaneously for the smooth running of any organisation in particular and the economy at large especially in Nigeria where the aforementioned associations exist (Obasi, 2003 cited in Nwoga and Casimir, 2013). Conflict therefore becomes inevitable given the divergent interest of these varied groups in the case of pricing of petroleum products.

The traditional theory of conflict as proposed by Fox (1966) vividly captures this situation in the pricing of petroleum products in Nigeria. According to Fox (1966) cited in Martin (2005), traditional theory of conflict states that like family unit, nations are made up of different



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group of people with different goals and interests. These different goals and interests are in perpetual conflict with each other. The resultant effect of these conflicts is the breakdown of peace and order. In order to avoid these conflicts and to bring peace and harmony, the units must engage in collective bargaining and agreement (Ekwoaba, Ideh & Ojukutu, 2015). For Fasan (2011), Otobo (2005), Fasoyin (1992), the relationships between industrial relation actors are naturally conflictual, because what is gain to one actor is seen as cost by the other actors. The Nigerian industrial relations system has been overwhelmed by the incessant strike actions in different sectors of the economy due to the different trade activities going on in the economy. The relationship between all the actors in trading activities is inherently conflictual and as such cannot be overlooked by the social partners in industrial relations, (Ekwoaba, Ideh & Ojukutu (2015).

Against the backdrop of the foregoing, this paper assesses how these Associations (trade unions and pressure groups) have performed over time especially in their relationship as concerning petroleum pricing. It looks at the breaches in the relationship of the associations, and the possible consequences of the breaches to workers and the economy. Secondly, it reviews the issue of deregulation of Nigeria oil sector and government success so far. The fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria in January 2012, its impact on business and economy, reactions of trade associations and Nigerians is brought to the fore as well. Thirdly, it considers the possibilities of breaches being redressed or avoided entirely.

## Trade Unions, Employers and the Government

Labour is the core of any economy. It cuts across different age brackets, skills, industries and organisation. For this reason, we have all forms of organised, standard and non-standard jobs that make up the entire workforce not forgetting the unemployed who are willing to work but yet to find any job (Obisi, 1996; Fajana, 2002). In looking at the labour union, it is important to see how they fit to the work force vis-à-vis the government. These relationships are expected to be cordial so that the individual worker's goals can be achieved side by side with the goals of the organisation or government they work for (Otobo, 2000). In other words, all the parties concerned have some expectations that must be met to an acceptable level for peace to exist. However, in the absence of this peace, then conflict sets in. It means there is a breach and if not well handled, it can escalate to strike - temporary work stoppage due to an unresolved conflict. Strike action can be called a walkout (Anyim, Chidi & Ogunyomi 2012a). It means mass refusal of employees to execute their duties, which most times are initiated by union. The strike could be as a result of Union-Management or Union-Government conflict. These strikes come in various forms and the choice of one to be used depends on the nature of the dispute and the objectives which the workers' group seeks to achieve. Some of the choices of strike available to aggrieved workers' group include:

**Work-to-Rule**: This is a conscious reduction in the pace of work, which reduces productivity and output. Here workers keep strictly to their contract of employment, and ignore any other extra little support they would have rendered to meeting organisational objectives. The aim is to register grievance, call management attention and create a forum for dialogue.

**Sympathy Strike**: This is a Secondary action, which has labour unions in solidarity of striking workers in another organisation. This type of strikes which occurs only in countries where government permits is so called because it is not with the direct employer of the secondary group.



ISSN: 2052-6393(Print), ISSN: 2052-6407(Online)

**Sit-down Strike**: This is very common amongst factory workers or organised work group. They take over the work station sitting down and preventing the employer from replacing them with strike breakers. The essence also is to slow down production and attract management attention.

**Overtime Ban:** This strategy used by workers is sternly keeping to the hours of work. Workers do not work extra hours, thereby increasing the overhead cost for management, especially the extra cost of production.

**Intimidation:** Though unethical, it is used to embarrass and humiliate the management and put them in bad light in the sight of customers and other associates. The unkempt appearances of workers to work etc are a typical example.

**General Strike Action:** This Mass industrial action is embarked upon by the majority of the labour force of any nation. It shows the stage of disagreement between all concerned groups and cuts across the different segments of the economy. The group striking is merely protesting to show their grievances. This most times grinds the economy, affects Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and so is bad. This type of strike is the focus of this paper in reviewing the fuel subsidy removal of first January 2012, in Nigeria.

**Background to Anti-Subsidy Removal Strikes**

Petroleum accounts for over 95% of Nigeria Foreign Exchange earnings since its discovery. Government upon government has given subsidy to the pump price of fuel - a by product of petroleum - to cushion the effect of poverty and aid underdevelopment (Obasi 2003 cited in Nwoga & Ani-Casimir, 2013). The government of Nigeria came up with a view of deregulating the oil sector of the economy because of global melt downs, discovery of oil by the United States of America - Nigeria's largest buyer of the product and the constant fluctuation of oil prices in the international market. By this, it means government's withdrawal of trade barriers from the sectors of which Petroleum Motel Spirit (Fuel/petrol) is one. By these, government would no longer be involved in price control, production and distribution of petroleum products. This will avail investors and other interested parties the opportunities of getting involved through privatization, liberalisation into Nigerian oil market thereby breaking monopoly. With the deregulation the market forces of demand, supply and competition becomes operational and prices are no longer fixed administratively but by market forces (Majekudonmi, 2013). The purpose of deregulation is to free government from the weight of funding projects, production of petroleum products and services that could be capital intensive, thereby encouraging local and foreign investors to participate in the expansion of the economy. It also allows improved economy that allows infrastructural development and improved life for citizens (Erimi & Akpan, 2012).

Government in narrowing this down said the four major government-owned refineries across the federation which were highly underutilised and almost non-existent, would be sold to investors, and the illegal bunkering, pipeline vandalism etc. which has brought about serious fire outbreaks that not only destroyed pipelines but also claimed multiplied thousands of lives, would be checked and reduced minimal. This government concluded that this will not only open up the industry but also strengthen it (Balooja , 2012).

Again, fuel subsidy is intended to alleviate the financial difficulty in the country. The fact remains that fuel is used by every segment of the economy – transport, manufacturing, banking segment to mention but a few. As the intended plan of deregulation was not being



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satisfactorily achieved by the government, it began to have a re-think on this which led to the removal of the fuel subsidy. The government has not fully succeeded in this venture as there have been series of nation-wide strikes as a result (Ibanga, 2011).

**Preceding the January 2012 Fuel Subsidy Removal**

Most Nigerians have become accustomed to a never-ending increase in the pump prices of petroleum products since the military regime dating back to the era of Gowon 1967-73. Fuel increase from that time has almost remained a yearly event. It is apparent that since then, the prices have remained constantly on the rise and the citizens have reacted accordingly. More often than not, in response to the reaction of the populace over the fuel price increase, the government is forced to reduce the price from hiked price to a more acceptable level. Often times, the labour union spearhead the disagreement and subsequent negotiation.

Statistics shows that in the last four-two years, Nigerians have witnessed the increment of fuel pump prices twenty five times as depicted in the table below:

**History of Fuel Pump Price strike Increase in Nigeria between 1973 - 2012**

| Year | Price | Percentage Increase (% increase) | Head of State/President |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1973 | 6k-8.45k | 40.8 | Gowon Yakubu |
| 1976 | 8.45k-9k | 6.5 | Muritala Mohammed |
| 1978 | 9k-15.3k | 70 | Olusegun Obasanjo |
| 1982 | 15.3k-20k | 30.7 | Shehu Shagari |
| 1986 | 20k-39.5k | 97.5 | Ibrahim Babangida |
| 1988 | 39.5k-42k | 6.33 | Ibrahim Babangida |
| 1989 | 42k-60k | Private cars only | Ibrahim Babangida |
| 1989 | 60k uniform price private and public | 42.56 | Ibrahim Babangida |
| 1991 | 60k-70k | 16.62 | Ibrahim Babangida |
| 1993 | 70k-#5 | 614 | Ernest Shoneko |
| 1993 | #5-#3.35k | -35 | Sani Abacha |
| 1994 | #3.35k-#15 | 361.54 | Sani Abacha |
| 1994 | #15-#11 | -26.79 | Sani Abacha |
| 1998 | #11-#25 | 127.27 | Abdullsalam Abubakar |
| 1999 | #25-#20 | -2 | Abdulsalam Abubakar |
| 2000 | #20-#30 | 50 | Olusegun Obasanjo |
| 2000 | #30-#22 | -10 | Olusegun Obasanjo |
| 2002 | #22-#26 | 18.18 | Olusegun Obasanjo |
| 2003 | #26-#42 | 23.08 | Olusegun Obasanjo |
| 2004 | #42-#50 | 19,05 | Olusegun Obasanjo |
| 2004 | #50-#65 | 30 | Olusegun Obasanjo |
| 2007 | #65-#75 | 15.38 | Olusegun Obasanjo |
| 2007 | #75-#65 | -15.38 | Shehu Yaradua |
| 20012 | #65-#141 | | Goodluck Jonathan |
| 2012 | #141-#97 | | Goodluck Jonathan |

*Source: Nwoga and Ani-Casimir (2013).*


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The increases in fuel prices subsequently led to strikes though the strikes became more pronounced with the advent of democratic rule and importation of fuel into the country from 2000. Statistics below shows the prices increases and subsequent strike days that followed in the democratic dispensation.

**History of Fuel Strike Actions in Nigeria between 2000 and 2012**

| Date | Cause of Strike | Duration of Strike | Resolution |
|---|---|---|---|
| June 1, 2000 | Priceof Petrol increase to #30/litre from #11/litre | Eight days | Price reduced to #20 per litre |
| June 16 2002 | Price of Petrol increase from #20/litre to #26/litre | Three days | Price retained at #26 per litre |
| June 30 – July 8, 2003 | Price of Petrol increase from #20/litre to #26/litre | Three days | Price reduced to #34/ litre |
| June 9 2004 | Price of Petrol increase from #34/litre to#50/litre | Three days | Government and NLC agreed to a new price of #42 per litre |
| October11, 2004 | Price of Petrol increase from #42/litre to #52/litre | Three days | Government appointed the 19-member Senator Ibrahim Mantu committee on palliatives. |
| September 2005 | Price increase from #52/litre to #65/litre | No strike | Protest by NLC and civil society groups led to a cut in price. |
| June 20, 2007 | Price increase from #65/litre to #70/litre | Four days | Price reduced to #65/litre |
| January 1, 2012 | Price increase from #65/litre to #141/litre. | Eight days | Price reduced to #97/litre |

*Source: Adagba, Ugwu and Eme (2012)*

This piece is restricted to year 2000 as depicted above, as there was no importation of any petroleum product prior to this time due to the fact that the four local refineries were performing optimally especially in the 1980s. Though there was a dramatic change from the 1990s on the importation of the petroleum products. The sudden increase in importation of petroleum products in year 2000 contributed to the adoption of deregulation policy mentioned earlier. The President Olusegun Obasanjo set up a special committee to review the supply and distribution of these products within Nigeria thereby overseeing the activities of the marketers. Petroleum Products Pricing Regulatory Agency (PPPRA) was set up to regulate the pricing of these products. This Agency could not sustain this task as there were various issues in the pricing of these important products (Centre for Public Policy Alternative, 2012; Adagba, Ugwu & Eme, 2012).

By 2002, the Federal Government declared that these products at the filling stations would not be taxed at the existing prices. On the contrary, the price was moved from #22 to #26. Naturally, there were reactions from Nigerians. The labour union spearheaded a 2-day strike which was called off as the government had the upper hand. As the populace were still grappling with that, there was yet another increase to #50 per litre a year after. This time, Nigeria Labour Congress did not lie low. A three-day strike followed, until they negotiated with the government and the price was reduced to #42 per litre. This time, the government


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and labour set up a 19-man Panel saddled with the responsibility of finding palliatives to cushion the effect of this increase under the leadership of Senator Ibrahim Mantu (Centre for Public Policy Alternative, 2012, Adagba, Ugwu & Eme, 2012). The scenario continues as depicted in the table above.

The spate of increase in the price of petroleum products is such that it has become an issue of discussion at the intellectual quarters. Successive governments and their supporters have always sought ways of explaining away the policy of the incessant increases criticised by the civil society groups and the Labour Congress (Balooja, 2012). At the initial stage, the Labour Congress seemed to be the only opposition to government along with student bodies across the country. But as time went on and with the growing frequency of the increases, government tried to justify their action by referring to it as “removal of subsidy”, “appropriate or right pricing”, and later deregulation (Adagba, Ugwu & Eme 2012).

From the time there was a growing popular outrage on the government over the spiral increase in the prices of petroleum products; many arguments were advanced to explain it away. One of such was that there was high government subsidy on these products and that has enabled people to smuggle them out of the country and sell them in neighbouring countries at a black market prices (Onyishi, Eme and Eneh, 2012). Government argued that if the price was put high, it would discourage smuggling of the products. A short interval after each increment, the government comes up with another, and yet another. The effect of such on the people and the economy was enormous. Costs of goods and services and generally cost of living remained permanently high and unaffordable (Onyeizugbe and Onwuka, 2012). One of the occasions while introducing increment in the price of petrol, the government of Ibrahim Babangida came up with a dual pricing regime, with the lower cost in favour of commercial transporters as a way of ensuring that the new pump price does not affect this sector and in turn avert the negative effect it would have on the economy. This was the best plan of accommodating the poor in the economy as far as fuel pricing is concerned. But that did not last as the next increment wiped out the dual regime and pushed the price to where it left Nigerians struggling to pay for them (Iyobhebha, 2011; Eme, 2011).

After it became obvious that argument on subsidy was waning, the government argued that it was pricing the petroleum products appropriately as these products were sold at the cheapest price than in any other country of China, Libya, Egypt, Cuba, Iran, Yemen and Venezuela (Oladoyin, 2013; Nwafor, Ojujiube & Asogwa, 2011). Many opinion leaders particularly from the organized labour in response to this contention argued that salary was lower in Nigeria compared to the other countries they based their argument of high price on. However, the government maintained that it was pricing the products appropriately.

On one of the increments carried out during the regime of Sani Abacha, the government made it quite clear that it was going to put aside a certain percentage of the fund generated from the increment for infrastructure and other development purposes (Eme, 2011). This showed that it was not really a question of reducing waste this time but a source of revenue to the government. That led to the setting up of the Petroleum Trust Fund, (PTF). While this Agency was carrying out some projects across the country, the new regime of Olusegun Obasanjo abolished it and increased the pump price again. This time it was said that the increment would abolish toll gates on high ways as part of the revenue generated from the new pricing regime would be used to take care of the roads, owned by the Federal Government across Nigeria. But it became obvious that no road was rehabilitated as projected (Khahid, Aguiura, Grethe, Minor & Walmstery, 2014).


ISSN: 2052-6393(Print), ISSN: 2052-6407(Online)

Under the new administration of Goodluck Jonathan, many things had gone wrong with the entire energy industry. The four refineries had been grounded and efforts for turn-around maintenance had ended in fiasco. This brought massive importation of refined products for domestic need. The direct outcome of this is that Nigerians have to face the problems that go with the importation of a regularly used commodity at the international market. With this, then comes another increment of pump price of petrol in January 2012.

**The Fuel Subsidy Removal Protest of January 1, 2012**

The plan to increase fuel price was in the offing for a long time before it was finally implemented on January 1, 2012, as Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Diezani Alison-Madueke and Sanusi Lamido all government spoke persons on fuel subsidy had earlier told the Nigerians that #1.3 trillion cost of subsidy had to go. . The government definitely knew the possible outcome of such a policy but however did not know that the reaction was going to be extensive and all involving. In the past it had been only the Nigeria Labour Congress, the students and a few civil society groups that had resisted such government policies. But this time, professional bodies and unions that had never been involved in any form of activism participated fully. The outcry of the astronomical increase coupled with wrong timing was unrivalled. It was announced on January 1, 2012 when everybody was in a festive mood. This was coupled with the fact that most people had travelled out of their locations and such would have to pay exorbitant rates on their return after the festivities (Bolooja 2012, Adagba, Ugwu & Eme 2012; Oladoyin 2013).

Preceding the increment, the Finance Minister, Dr.Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala in a press conference shortly before then, had said the date for the removal of subsidy was not yet known as the president was still consulting with stakeholders on the matter. Expectations were therefore rife that it would be sometime around April or thereabout that it would be implemented. It therefore became a great shock to Nigerians that it came so suddenly catching Nigerians unawares. Many people therefore saw the government as insensitive and so all appeals to the people or understanding made no impact. Even some campaigns carried out by individuals and organisations in support of the removal of subsidy only succeeded in fanning the embers of anger and disgust of the vast majority of the people. Such people and organisations were branded the mouth piece of the government or even sycophants.

Another channel of anger of the people on the new policy was from the angle of the support given to President Goodluck Jonathan during his campaign and even before, considering the circumstances surrounding his emergence to the presidency. It was generally believed that no presidential candidate had ever been given such a massive support that dovetailed into a landslide victory. There were comments and counter comments from various interest groups.

**The Week-Long Strike**

As the popular resentment over the issue was growing in a multi-dimensional streak, meetings were held in many quarters on how to tackle the government. Groups like the Save Nigeria Group (SNG), Performing Musicians Association of Nigeria (PMAN), various professional bodies and Trade Unions under the auspices of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), and Trade Union Congress (TUC) all assembled a rally as they declared a strike starting from January 9, to register their disagreement with the new pump price (Adagba, Ugwu and Eme, 2012). The large crowd of people at the rally on each day of the one week showed total refusal of the people for the new price. The presence of many artists, musicians,



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movie actors, comedians and other celebrities added colour as they entertained the audience and turned the rally into a fun-fare and carnival of some sort. Speeches were made by leaders of bodies that were represented at the rally. Most of them began by demanding a return to the #65 per litre old price. There were many television cameras there beaming and broadcasting it live. Similar activities were happening simultaneously in other major cities in the country. Those at home were not left out as high levels of communication were on via the social networking apparatus. This was a clear case of collective strength. The Labour Union agreed with Nigeria Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) and Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN) not to join strike as that would have made it more excruciating on the people. This helped to facilitate the availability of fuel that enabled people to move about in the evening of each day when it is obvious that the day's activities had been completely paralysed. This helped to sustain the momentum while the NLC and Trade Union Congress (TUC) engaged the government in lengthy negotiations that first ended in a deadlock and later with the intervention of President Goodluck Jonathan the price was reduced to #97 per litre from between #138 and #141 that triggered the protest. For the fact that the civil society groups played a vital role in the strike the impact was felt beyond Abuja and Lagos as had always been the case each time such took place. This time in virtually every major city of the country rallies and protest marches took place.

**The Climax of the Strike**

By the time the rallies commemorating the strikes had lasted one week with the fun-fare that characterised it, it was obvious that Nigerians had wished it continued as besides protesting against the subsidy removal, it was a place to ease off tension arising from the high rate of unemployment and generally the effect of high cost of living. Again, the boredom of sitting at home was taken care of there. This is in recognition of the fact that most of the youths that were there regularly were unemployed as those employed saw the strike as a time of rest from their jobs. On Friday as the last working day of the strike week, the organisers suspended it to allow for Nigerians to re-stock food and other necessities as the negotiation of labour and government representatives was still in deadlock. By Monday the 16$^{th}$ of January being the following week, labour had began to announce that they would continue the strike in-doors as no rallies could be held in the face of the challenging security situation in the country. It was already speculated that some un-named groups were planning to hijack the rally for their selfish ends. It had then become obvious to the government that if the trend continued that it could lead to far unprecedented circumstances and possibly a revolution in the face of the Arab spring that was on-going in the Middle East as it started in a similar way in those countries (Centre for Public Policy Alternative, 2012). Already people at the rally were calling for the removal of the president and verbally attacking his economic team in the past one week. With this position adopted by Labour, the enthusiasm was partly eroded. By the time people went to the rally venue, Gani Fawehinmi Freedom Square at Ojota, armed police had taken over the place and that was the end of the humorous rally that lasted five days, while the rest of the days were observed indoors.

**The Impact of the Subsidy-removal Strike on Nigerian Economy**

There is no doubt that every segments of the economy was adversely affected afterwards as the Union exercised their right to strike. Economic Watchers observed that the strike led to the Nigerian economy losing about #720billion owing to the fact that business activities were crippled that period. During this period under review, business activities were completely


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shutdown with exception to the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE) where trading was skeletally done and the official market of the foreign exchange (Forex) where the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) managed minimal transactions on Monday and Wednesday. The stock market that was hitherto epileptic suffered more downward trend (Centre for Public Policy Alternative, 2012).

In the other sectors, cost of transportation rose particularly the inter-city transport which increased by about 120%. Transporters complained of the non-availability of fuel and the chaotic queues at petrol stations. Conversely, passengers lamented about the outrageous increase in fare (Nwafor, Ojujiuba & Asogwa, 2011). This made a negative impact on the prices of goods and services all over the nation. The banks, financial institutions, schools, traders, all had fair share of these loses.

However, the strike had some good sides. The so-called cabals were held accountable for the woes for the first time. For once in recent times, the trade union held the government to a fruitful showdown that called for probing of different parties associated with this. Public office holders were made conscious of accounting for the office they occupy. One significant point of this strike is the fact that there were exposures of what happens behind the scene and those in government are now more conscious of good governance and proper accountability. It is obvious that the Labour Union sort a redress through negotiation and finally a downward review of the increased pump price of petrol (Anyim et al, 2012).

During the period of the strike, government resorted to alternative industrial disputes settlement - the National Industrial and the Arbitration Courts which by constitution oversees issues relating to industrial relations, to seek injunction restraining NLC and TUC from going on the rally and strike. The Court however, granted an interim injunction restraining the NLC and TUC, but the Motion on Notice was yet to be determined in accordance with the existing laws, the strike began as the union dared the government.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Industrial actions arising from fuel price increases have become too frequent that the government need to found a lasting solution. The failure to do so overtime means that it has come to stay, and this is not in the interest of the nation or its already-ailing economy. The nation loses millions of naira in terms of revenue each time it takes place. The government should be serious about tackling the malady that has characterised the oil industry for a long time, by looking back to the time when such was absent and try to see why and how things were done as Nigerians were saved the harrowing experience that they have come to live with irrespective of the fact that Nigeria is one of the leading exporters of crude oil.

It is quite appalling that a country that has four refineries would be importing refined products, paying so much on subsidy while conversely exporting crude oil. Government must be dispassionate in tackling the problems plaguing the industry with a view to dealing with all the people and organisations that have constituted a cog in the wheel of progress of the industry (Chidi, 2011). Government should also take the country beyond merely having refinery for fuel, but make them functional as well as have refinery for every petrochemical substance that comes out of crude oil as a way of advancing Nigeria's development and ensuring that nobody takes the country for a ride in seeking his selfish ends as was done in the April-May, 2015 by the cartel of oil market.


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Since subsidy has become recurrent factor in our oil sector, government should therefore come up with a policy that will ensure the availability of the products and price stability. This could be done by revamping the refineries and handing them to competent investors to manage while government oversees their activities. Finally, as an offshoot of the protest, government decided to probe into the beneficiaries of the subsidy which it claimed was just a few people who constituted themselves into a cabal. From the probes by both National Assembly and independent groups, it is obvious that a few people have cornered the petroleum industry and shared it like a spoil of war. Government should therefore ensure that for every kobo paid and received by the cartel for work they did not do, they should pay back and get other punishments irrespective of who they are in the society. Government should also set a minimum standard which every player in the industry must attain to be licensed, and there should be a tough regulatory agency void of corrupt men and shady practices that should monitor daily operations of stakeholder of the industry.

On the other hand, the place of law and order must be recognised alongside with the Rule of Law. The Nigerian Labour Congress and the Trade Union Congress need not take laws into their hands by rallying the Nigerian workers to a strike when there really was no trade dispute. The 2012 strike is obviously a case of civil protest on one side and an industrial action on the other. NLC and TUC should insist that the refineries be fixed and governments must involve them in any proposed increase, as to possibly avert strikes or at least reducing the frequency.

## CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, strike like any other subject has been variously reviewed, as an issue that has a direct influence on the economy and the citizenry. As a result, the study shows that the workforce of various economies uses strike as a last tool to seek attention in labour disputes'. The paper went on to analyse the socio-economic implications of industrial conflicts, particularly strikes, in Nigeria. It identified Industrial conflict as the dispute that occurs when the goals, interest or values of different parties in an industrial setting are incompatible (Otobo, 2005). Such conflicts which are unavoidable has such attributes as non-recognition of union, public policies, failure of collective bargaining, etc, are possible causes of industrial actions (Anyim, Ikemuefuna, & Ogunyomi, 2011)

However, the paper identified that the frequency of strike incidence in Nigeria are disturbing, especially as it regards to fuel price increase strikes. This paper also pointed out that while industrial conflicts, strikes and work stoppages affect particularly the economic development of Nigeria through low national productivity, it also has serious sociological consequences such as the dislocation and severance of the socialisation function of work. The paper therefore, suggested that all stakeholders involved in industrial relations should adopt logical, accountable and sustainable mechanisms in addition to peaceful negotiation and other alternative dispute resolution to arrest the embarrassing, persistent and recurring spate of strikes that follows increase in fuel price hikes, supporting (Anyim, Elegbede, & Gbajumo, 2011).


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