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INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE OF NURSES ON REMUNERATION IMPROVEMENT: THE ROLE OF ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION IN PUBLIC HOSPITALS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper examined industrial dispute on nurses remuneration improvement and the role of alternative dispute improvement in public hospitals. The objectives of this study are, to investigate how improving remuneration positively influences nurses' performance in public hospitals, and to examine the role of alternative dispute resolution in offering sustainable industrial harmony between nurses and management in public hospitals. Conflict resolution theory by Burton (1986) was utilized to strengthen the discourse. The descriptive survey design and quantitative approach were adopted. The purposive sampling technique was used in administering questionnaire to 184 respondents to elicit data. The secondary sources of data include newspapers, journals and books. The questionnaires were retrieved from participants, and the data were analyzed and presented on tables. The findings reveal that the improving of remuneration of nurses positively influences their performance in public hospitals. In addition, the findings show that alternative dispute resolution method offers sustainable industrial harmony between nurses and management in public hospitals. Based on the findings, the study recommends that management of public hospitals should collaborate with nurses on issues of improving their remuneration for better welfare package that can spur them to perform efficiently and effectively, as to prevent industrial dispute that can impede regular healthcare service delivery in public hospitals. Management of public hospitals and nurses should adopt alternative dispute resolution methods for settlement of industrial dispute and each party should accept the terms preferred by mediators and facilitators which can offer sustainable industrial harmony between nurses and management in public hospitals. Government should provide funds that can fairly compensate nurses work efforts, cover every allowance, and accommodate their quest for improved remuneration to avert any form of dispute between management and nurses in public hospitals

Keywords: Industrial Dispute, Nurses, Remuneration, Improvement, Public Hospitals, Alternative Dispute Resolution

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Introduction

Industrial dispute is the consequence of unsatisfactory relationship between employers and employees, employers and workmen, workmen and workmen on working conditions, wages, salary, benefits, and other work issues that are instrumental to socio economic development, work commitment, work performance and promotion in the workplace. It also refers to the discord that arises between nurses' association, the government, and hospital management. Industrial dispute leads to industrial action like strike which is the most common type of industrial dispute. Industrial dispute concerns the disagreement between various party's interest. The nurses in public hospitals rely on their national association representatives during negotiations with conflict party for improved remuneration. In public hospitals, nurses and midwives collectively make demands for better remuneration, and when such demands are ignored, they are left with the option of embarking on strike. This strike is always between the nurses and midwifery association of Nigeria, hospital management, ministry of health as well as other relevant government agencies.

Certain factors overtime triggers industrial disputes between nurses' association, hospital management and government. To mention but few of these factors are the disagreement over allowances, salary, fringe benefits, and overtime payments which in a nutshell refers to remuneration system. In addition, other issues may point to working conditions, quality of work life, job security, dismissal, reinstatement, rules governing employment conditions, management reluctance to involve employees in decision making, and recognition of trade unions. After a period of time, employees usually express their desire for more, indicate areas of need and expectation for fulfillment to have work satisfaction. At such a time, workers begin to demand for improved remuneration such as attractive pay, allowances, better fringe benefits, monetary incentives, and health benefits which may not be agreeable by hospitals management to offer nurses. However, management may sometime provide little than what has been demanded. Furthermore, nurses in public hospitals may also want higher quality of work life, recognition, advancement, and status upgrade, but in such circumstance, management may show reluctance in providing the demands. It is at this juncture that disagreement can build up, and this may likely develop antagonism between hospital management and nurses, and can also result to industrial conflict.

Hospitals provides broader range of healthcare services which are mostly carried out by healthcare professionals such as doctors, nurses, midwives, laboratory experts, pharmacists, and non-healthcare professionals. However, nurses constitute the nexus of the healthcare services provider team. Nurses are in high demand globally due to their key role in maintaining quality work and services in hospitals. More so, nurses are healthcare professionals who provide quality nursing care and services in both private and public hospitals with the aim of improving patients' well-being and satisfaction. Nurses' ability in offering care and services to patients can foster patients' satisfaction and improve patient outcomes. The existence of nurses in hospitals is fundamental, as they are viewed as a critical asset to hospital management in determining hospital attainment of its pivotal goal of treatment and well-being of patients (Nova, 2010).

Nurses receive weekly or monthly income in the form of remuneration for offering health services to patients in public or private hospitals (Soetisna et. al., 2013). As qualified professional workforce, nurses play their role as experts in healthcare delivery services. The quality of services provided is based on their knowledge, expertise, responsibility, work commitment, discipline, dedication, ideas, and creativity in hospitals (Turmidzi, 2019).Furthermore, hospital management find it really challenging to keep skilled and bright nurses due to the level of quality of work life desired by nurses in workplaces and at home.

As a result of the foregoing, nurses place their satisfaction on high remuneration, such as salary, hazard allowance, fringe benefits, promotion pay, job security, and even a safe working environment (Amjadet. al., 2024). More so, when hospital management focus on employee's well-being, the workers can foster effective patient care. Therefore, giving nurses a better pay might be a top issue to deliberate among nursing circle in public hospitals (Chen et. al., 2024).

At the time of industrial dispute between nurses, hospital management, and government, the choice of strategy to adopt in mediating the dispute and its outcomes without litigation remain a critical issue to deliberate. It has been a common practice that whenever, industrial disputes arise, government agencies, departments, and industrial courts usually interfere in proffering interventional attempts through with nurses and midwifery representatives, and the healthcare regulatory agencies as well as the hospital management representatives. During this period, the results often indicate the inability of not achieving quick and harmonious resolution among the parties. At such deadlock, the industrial court may be instructed by the government to intermeddle with the dispute issues through the provisions of the industrial and labour laws or acts of the country. However, there is the advocacy for the adoption of alternative dispute resolution instead of lingering and prolonging issues at the industrial court. Alternative dispute resolution process can provide opportunities for every party to directly or indirectly collectively contribute their voices and ideas toward resolving the discrepancies between the conflicting parties as quickly as possible.

Catalogues of studies have shown that good pay boosts up work morale, increases work productivity, and encourage employee retention. An increase in pay may likely discourage nurses turnover as well as the issue of migrating to foreign countries in search for jobs with better pay (Roza, 2024). However, researchers have also stipulated that competitive wages and job performance recognition as well as having opportunities for career growth can suffice nurses' satisfaction in public hospitals (Zhang et. al., 2023). Meanwhile, employees solidly rely on allowances, benefits, wages, and salary, and nurses want to participate in deciding their pay models and how often it should be available rather than not actually knowing how they are decided in public hospitals (Claudia et. al., 2017). In addition, nurses want to explore how pay practices tally with workplace responsibilities, elements, and how satisfactory feel (Chan et. al., 2012).

Nurses in public hospitals are confronted with several difficulties in their workplaces. The series of job problems confronting nurses among others are, high work overloads, job discrepancies, nursing job errors, issues of low remuneration and job insecurity. These obstacles usually ensue dispute between nursing and midwifery association and hospital management at both private and public health institutions. Furthermore, these problems also come with disparities and negative consequences on the nurse's performance, welfare and can have significant dangerous outcomes on patients' healthcare. Proper interrogation of the consequences of these discrepancies can neither show high-quality healthcare accomplishment nor can it indicate positive patient healthcare approach (Toode, 2015). Basu et. al., (2012) in research on "Comparative Performance of Private and Public Healthcare Systems in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Systematic Review." found that hospital management have to show efficiency, accountability, and effectiveness in developing and implementing hospitals professionals' remuneration plan for nurses in other to improve work harmony and job satisfaction. To this end, nurses can sustain in their job pace and job performance Al-Mutairi, (2015).

Baljoon et. al., (2018) found that nurses improved remuneration and cordial relationship with patients in hospitals in which they receive healthcare services was the major factors for

nurses' work motivation and satisfaction. However, Gunawan et. al., (2017) found that good pay and career development for nurses indicated a significant observation on the work motivation of nurses at public hospitals. Asriani et. al., (2020) conducted research on "The Effect of Compensation and Motivation to Employee Performance". The study found that compensation and motivation were significantly related to nurses' job performance. The study by Ayu et. al., (2020) found that better compensation has significant influence on nurses' work performance. Muthmainnah et. al., (2018) found that improvement on remuneration for nurses influenced nurses' performance in hospitals, and it aided nurses to offer quality of healthcare services to patients in hospitals. This proves that a well-improved remuneration process increases nurses work motivation, job productivity, and work satisfaction.

Anggraini et. al., (2019) found that remuneration significantly impacted on work discipline, work motivation, and job performance of nurses. Therefore, Mendes et. al., (2017) in their research found that a positive significant relationship exists between remuneration system and work efficiency of nurse's medical healthcare services, and this has shown that remuneration is a catalyst of nurses' motivation and efficiency medical in providing healthcare services in hospitals. It is against these backdrops that this study seeks to interrogate how remuneration improvement demand can trigger nurses and midwives into embarking on industrial dispute, how government labour policies contribute to prolonged industrial dispute resolution, and how alternative dispute resolution approach can be a panacea to industrial dispute in public hospitals.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate how improving remuneration positively influences nurses' performance in public hospitals.
2. To examine the role of alternative dispute resolution in offering sustainable industrial harmony between nurses and management in public hospitals.

Research Questions

1. How can improving remuneration positively influences nurses' performance in public hospitals?
2. What is the role of alternative dispute resolution in offering sustainable industrial harmony between nurses and management in public hospitals?

Remuneration and Performance

Remuneration is the compensation system for employees in various organizations such as hospitals, manufacturing, technical companies, marketing companies, information and communication companies. Remuneration is given is on the basis of the work done by workers of all categories, status, position, and value placed on any job. According to Sofa (2008) remuneration is the reward offered to workers as a result of achieving goals as well as attaining organizational success. It is provided in line with the conditions of service of organizations. Remuneration can influence workers motivation as well as improve work performance. The regular improvement of remuneration can raise employee's morale for better performance even in public hospitals. Remuneration can have the impact of increasing nurses' performance in healthcare services delivery in hospitals (Hartati, Rima, & Semiarty, 2019).

Remuneration system refers to the payroll system designed to compensate employees (Roberia, 2009). Furthermore, it is provided to employees' base on an existing employment

relationship that allows employees complete job roles and promote organizational values. In general, there are many opinions that judge that remuneration has similarities with compensation. Remuneration or compensation is the obligation of the employer and management to give to engaged employees (Roberia, 2009). Remuneration is an indispensable practice from both private and public organizations. In a deeper sense, it is an act of repayment of employees' services, and work done. As a compensation received from employers, workers make great achievements while realizing organizational goals (Pora, 2011). Accordingly, remuneration or compensation system is believed to having the capacity to spur employees into increasing work motivation and commitment to record higher performance, especially in public hospitals. Compensation can influence the quality of services provided at public hospitals. Quality services can hinge on the good remuneration system provided to healthcare workers. Furthermore, it can also generate employee's motivation for improved work performance (Milkovich et. al., 2014).

Remuneration can become strategic when it influences employees, engender motivate, and causes the attraction of resourceful individuals to enlist in an organization. Since remuneration can be designed to spur employees to work with motivation in achieving an organization's goal, it therefore becomes imperative and obligatory for employers and management to routinely review the compensation system it often uses to influence workers in striking them to make decisions that conform to organizational needs. Improving on remuneration in hospitals can also lead to improved nurses' performance in providing quality of healthcare in public hospitals (Muthmainnah, 2017). Therefore, nurses' performance can be increased when there is increase in their remuneration package (Asiamah et. al., 2019). The issue of nurses' migration to foreign countries can be put on hold when the remuneration system aligns with nurses' expectations and demand from hospital management (Darmawan et. al., 2021).

Performance constitutes work outcome of employees' responsibilities that fulfils organizations core objectives. According to Moeheriono, (2012) it is described as the level of individuals achievement from adhering to ethics, policies, organizational goals, vision, strategic planning, and mission statement. Furthermore, Mangkunegara (2009) argued that there are critical factors that can influence the performance of employees such as individual ability, knowledge, and skill. For better performance, employee's expertise should match their job placement. Motivation is a key factor at workplace for employee performance. Motivation is exposes employees' attitude to work condition, and it moves employees to achieve the objectives and goals of organizations. Another factor that can condition performance as argued by Jumaslini (2011) is when remuneration is not offered proportionally. However, remuneration can be a tool toward the realization of organizations vision and mission. It can also aid in attracting qualified, experienced, competent, and skilled employees. Moreso, it prevents employee turnover and enables the retention of qualified employees who are motivated to work efficiently and effectively. Remuneration dispute is capable of distorting employees' performance in organizations as it can directly impede the achievement of organizational goals (Fitria et. al., 2014).

Alternative Dispute Resolution and Sustainable Industrial Harmony

In recent times, issues of industrial disputes keep escalating, and this has been major concern to government, management, labour leaders as well union representatives in developing and developed countries. The attraction and reaction of various parties to disputes resolution becomes pivotal when it comes to the search for the quickest way to procure sustainable industrial harmony. To this end, the adoption of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) becomes a necessity to all stakeholders involve in industrial dispute. ADR is the series of

method tipped to replace litigation in terms of resolving any form of industrial disputes. It captures several ways of settling disagreements, disputes and disharmony outside the court premises. It may appear informal, less expensive and less time duration than the time spent mostly in court room. The conventional way of resolving employment or industrial dispute has often been through organizational grievance and disciplinary panels, procedures involving top management officials, and industrial court or tribunals (Ury et. al., 1993).

The courts and tribunals have been playing key role in employment dispute resolution, however, there has been struggles by the tribunals to deliver speedy and cost-effective industrial dispute resolution in their effort to achieve sustainable industrial harmony (Hann & Teague, 2012). Furthermore, to counterbalance the difficulty of the tribunal systems, surfaces the potential benefits of replacing the industrial court system with ADR. Organizations are becoming aware of why they should adopt ADR and jettison the traditional route to industrial dispute resolution. With the view and perception of its functionality and effectiveness, ADR is believed to have focus on creating avenues for settlement with the aim of generating trust, straightforwardness, and sustainability in offering lasting industrial harmony. It can be less stressful and accommodating (Davis, 2002). Hence, industrial courts and tribunals becomes inappropriate to the disputing parties who have been interacting over a long-term, and have deepened their employment relations (Sander 1976). The ADR can promote sustainable harmony after dispute resolution. This connotes that organizations stand the chance of retaining skillful and experienced employees. ADR can afford organizations the benefits of flaring higher morale, greater capacity, and commitment to resolving disputes (Roche & Teague, 2012).

Alternative dispute resolution,(ADR) involves the collaboration of disputing parties in search of resolution. This increases the chances for each party to feel satisfied with whatever outcome that might surface than in the case where a trial judge gives ruling (Oni-Ojo, Iyiola & Osibanjo, 2014). A former president of the National Industrial Court of Nigeria, Justice Babatunde Adejumo posited that the emergence of ADR in National Industrial Court was a major priority. Furthermore, the ADR establishment and utilization would definitely attract a huge acceptance in the industrial sector. Therefore, ADR approach in mediation is receiving a broader recognition in countries like the United States, Germany and other countries (Badejo & Ojo, 2015). It aids in resolving disputes without rancor or bitterness

The ADR approaches include mediation, negotiation, and arbitration, which enhance conflict resolution away from litigation. In negotiation, disputing parties can resolve issues directly, whereas mediation makes use of third party to seek mutual agreement. In addition, arbitration also involves third party who listen to comments from both sides and provide a binding or non-binding decision. In Nigeria, the constitution endorses negotiation, mediation, arbitration, and conciliation (C-Advocate Newspaper, 2024).

1. Negotiation is the informal ADR approach that allows conflict parties to have direct communication in resolving their disputes without involving a third party. Hence, this method relies on mutual concession or agreement, and can be effective in a situation where relationship exist.
2. Mediation involves a neutral third-party facilitation in discussing with disputing parties to assist them in mutually adopting acceptable agreement. In this circumstance, the mediator does not impose a solution, but allows parties to take control over any probable outcome. The process promotes communication and understanding. It can be suitable for individual and business disputes.

3. Arbitration concerns each party handing over their disputes to panel of arbitrators, whose decision is binding. It provides quick resolution in comparison to litigation. It is common with commercial disputes.
4. Conciliation involves a conciliator who proposes actively ways to solve the disputes. It also involves giving directives as the conciliator offers settlement terms with the aim to restore relationship as resolution becomes viable

The advantages of ADR are verifiable because it offers alternatives to litigation and promote amicable and faster resolution. However, in Nigeria it faces several challenges ranging from inadequate legal frameworks, reluctance from various parties, lack of awareness among disputing parties, and the influence of godfatherism (C-Advocate Newspaper, 2024).

Sustainable industrial harmony is the dream of every organization. It is a situation of mutual respect and cooperation that exist between employers, unions, and employees, where they have cordial relationships toward achieving shared goals and partners to ensure long-term stability and progress. However, it is not the absence of disagreement, but the effectiveness of resolving disputes constructively through channels of communication, negotiation and understanding of collective goals. Management and employees view each other as partners toward realizable goals, recognizes that every individual effort and contribution is the success of all. Furthermore, it involves a harmonious workplace, where each individual is treated with dignity and respect, enhancing open communication, willingness to negotiate, tolerance, and collective bargaining and responsible management is upheld. Therefore, industrial harmony covers cooperation, communication, collective bargaining, responsibility, employment policy, and consultation. More so, cooperation between employers and employees can enhance industrial harmony. And where there is a fair relationship between management and employees that is anchored on mutual respect and in decision making, such conditions can sustain industrial harmony (Dokpesi & Yesufu, 2024).

Theoretical Framework

The conflict resolution theory guides this study. The theory was propounded by Burton (1986). It emphasizes that conflict resolution can be facilitated by parties involved in conflict situation. In addition, the theory emphasis is on following laid down processes that can meet the needs of disputing parties, and the provision of a forum for resolution of industrial conflict. The theory upholds mediation in finding room for compromises, and giving assistance to disputing parties to reach agreement. In this case, a facilitator seeks to help the conflict parties arrive at a common goal.

Materials and Method

This study adopted quantitative and descriptive survey design to enable the collection of data. However, data were retrieved from secondary sources, and from key respondents, using structured questionnaire that was designed in four Likert format of strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree and disagree. Observed sample size of 184 nurses were considered to be sufficient as the representative sample of nurses in public hospitals from both selected federal and state-owned hospitals in Rivers State.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: How improving remuneration positively influences nurses' performance in public hospitals.

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	84	45.7
Agree	62	33.7
Strongly Disagree	22	12
Disagree	16	8.6
Total	184	100

Source: Nworgu (2025)

The analysis on table 1 indicates the summary responses on how improving remuneration positively influences nurses' performances in public hospitals. 84 (45.7%) strongly agree and 62 (33.7%) of nurses agree respectively that improving their remuneration positively influences performance in public hospitals. However, 22 (12%) and 16 (8.6%) of nurses strongly disagree and disagree respectively that improving remuneration influence nurses' performance in public hospitals. The result shows that more nurses agree that improving remuneration of nurses positively influences performance. Therefore, the study stands to accept that improving nurses' remuneration positively influences nurses' performance in public hospitals in Rivers State.

Table 2: Alternative dispute resolution plays the role of offering sustainable industrial harmony between nurses and management in public hospitals.

Variable	Frequency	Per cent
Strongly Agree	86	46.7
Agree	72	39.1
Strongly Disagree	12	6.5
Disagree	14	7.6
Total	184	100

Source: Nworgu (2025)

The results on table 2 reveals summarily that 86 (46.7%) and 72 (39.1%) strongly agree and agree respectively that alternative dispute resolution play the role of offering sustainable industrial harmony between nurses and management in public hospitals. Meanwhile, 12 (6.5%) and 14 (7.6%) strongly disagree and disagree respectively that alternative dispute resolution plays the role of offering sustainable industrial harmony between nurses and management in public hospitals in Rivers State. Since the number of nurses that agree to the stated opinion is greater, the study stands the chance to accept that alternative dispute resolution play the role of offering sustainable industrial harmony between nurses and management in public hospitals in Rivers State.

Conclusion

The result of this study has shown that improving on the remuneration of nurses in public hospitals positively influences nurses work performance. Therefore, periodic increase of the wages, salary, rewards, compensation, and regular support to nurses' welfare is capable of spurring nurses to work commitment and higher work performance. In the same vein, it has also been revealed that alternative dispute resolution offers more opportunities for sustainable industrial harmony between nurses and management in public hospitals than adopting the time-consuming process of litigation to arrive at resolution during periods of industrial disputes. Conflicts at workplace can be resolved faster when the disputing parties accept to adopt alternative dispute resolution methods.

Recommendations

1. Management of public hospitals should collaborate with nurses on issues of improving their remuneration for better welfare package that can spur them to perform efficiently and effectively, as to prevent industrial dispute that can impede regular healthcare service delivery in public hospitals.
2. Management of public hospitals and nurses should adopt alternative dispute resolution methods for settlement of industrial dispute and each party should accept the terms preferred by mediators and facilitators which can offer sustainable industrial harmony between nurses and management in public hospitals.
3. Government should provide funds that can fairly compensate nurses work efforts, cover every allowance, and accommodate their quest for improved remuneration to avert any form of dispute between management and nurses in public hospitals.

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