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# Challenges Of Casualization Of Labour In Nigeria: An Appraisal

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**ABSTRACT**

The casualization of labour in Nigeria presents significant challenges to the protection of workers' rights and the stability of the workforce. This employment practice, characterised by short-term contracts, lack of job security, and minimal or no benefits, has become increasingly prevalent in both the public and private sectors. Employers often adopt casualization as a cost-cutting strategy, bypassing statutory obligations related to pensions, healthcare, and other entitlements. However, this trend undermines decent work principles and contributes to the exploitation and marginalization of workers. Casual workers frequently face poor working conditions, low wages, limited access to legal remedies, and exclusion from trade union representation. The regulatory framework governing labour relations in Nigeria, including the Labour Act and the Constitution, has proven inadequate in curbing the abuse of casual employment, partly due to loopholes, weak enforcement mechanisms, and the reluctance of government agencies to intervene effectively. Furthermore, the rise in casual labour has broader implications for economic productivity, industrial harmony, and social protection. This paper examines the causes, legal implications, and socio-economic effects of casualization, while advocating for stronger labour policies, effective enforcement of existing laws, and inclusive labour reforms that ensure fair treatment, security, and dignity for all categories of workers in Nigeria.

**Keywords**: Worker, Casual Worker, Casualization, Job Security, Employer

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of labour casualization has attracted growing academic, legal, and policy attention in Nigeria due to its implications for workers' rights, industrial relations, and national development. Casualization of labour refers to the employment of workers on a non-permanent, non-pensionable, and often informal basis, whereby employees are denied the rights and benefits typically accruing to full-time workers, such as job security, medical benefits, union representation, and access to social protection.[1] In Nigeria, this phenomenon has gained traction across various sectors, including banking, manufacturing, telecommunications, oil and gas, and even parts of the public service, largely driven by economic liberalization, globalization, technological advancement, and employer strategies aimed at cost minimization. While the practice may offer short-term financial advantages to employers, it has precipitated a wide range of structural and human rights concerns, particularly for the affected workers.[2]

The origin of casual labour in Nigeria can be traced to the colonial period, when low-skilled workers were employed temporarily to fulfil short-term tasks without access to enduring employment rights. However, what was once a peripheral employment model has become institutionalized in post-independence

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[1] A E Ezeani, 'Labour Market Reforms and Employment Casualisation in Nigeria' [2002] (4)(2) *Journal of African Employment Studies*, 88.

[2] A A Adeogun, 'Casualisation and Labour Rights in Nigeria' [2006] (5)(1) *Nigerian Labour Law Journal,* 55.

Nigeria, especially from the late 1980s onwards following the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), which compelled the Nigerian state to embrace neo-liberal economic reforms.[3] These reforms led to the downsizing of the civil service, privatization of public enterprises, and deregulation of the labour market, all of which laid fertile ground for the normalization of precarious employment practices.[4] Today, casualization is no longer limited to unskilled jobs; it now extends to skilled professionals, many of whom work under exploitative terms that fall short of international labour standards.[5]

The casualization trend reflects a broader erosion of labour rights in Nigeria. Casual workers are often subjected to poor working conditions, arbitrary dismissal, and inadequate remuneration. Many are deprived of essential employment benefits, such as contributory pension schemes, health insurance, maternity leave, and severance pay.[6] More disturbingly, casual employees are generally excluded from union membership and collective bargaining processes, thereby lacking the institutional support to negotiate better terms of employment or to challenge unfair labour practices.[7] This structural vulnerability fosters economic insecurity and social disillusionment among a significant segment of the Nigerian workforce. It also undermines the objectives of decent work as championed by the International Labour Organization (ILO), of which Nigeria is a member state.[8]

The legal framework regulating employment relations in Nigeria appears inadequate in addressing the challenges posed by casualization. The Labour Act, which remains the principal statute on labour matters, is outdated and limited in scope, applying primarily to workers engaged in manual and clerical jobs, while excluding many categories of employees.[9] Additionally, there is a lack of clear legislative definition or regulation of casual work, leaving employers with wide discretion to determine employment terms. Though the Nigerian Constitution guarantees the right to dignity of labour and freedom of association, enforcement remains weak due to regulatory inefficiencies, corruption, and institutional apathy.[10] Courts have occasionally offered progressive interpretations in favour of workers, but such rulings are often undermined by the broader socio-political and economic context that favours capital over labour.[11]

Casualization also has broader socio-economic ramifications. It contributes to income inequality, fuels labour unrest, and inhibits long-term workforce development. Workers who lack job security are unlikely to invest in skills acquisition or long-term financial planning, which in turn affects productivity and national economic performance.[12] Furthermore, the high turnover and low morale associated with casual employment may affect service delivery, particularly in critical sectors such as healthcare, education, and public administration. The situation is further compounded by the absence of a reliable social security system to cushion the effects of precarious employment.[13]

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[3] B C Okafor, 'Structural Adjustment and Casual Labour in Nigeria' [2010] (18)(2) *African Economic Review,* 112.

[4] C O Uche, 'Deregulation and Labour Insecurity in Nigeria' [2015] (23)(3) *Labour Studies Quarterly,* 98.

[5] D A Oyeyemi, 'Professional Casualisation in the Nigerian Oil Sector: Legal and Ethical Concerns' [2019] (7)(1) *Nigerian Journal of Labour Law,* 41.

[6] I O Agomo, *Nigerian Employment and Labour Relations Law and Practice* (Lagos: Concept Publications, 2011).

[7] O A Fajana, *Industrial Relations in Nigeria: Theory and Features* (Lagos: Labofin and Company, 2006).

[8] N D Onwe, 'Impacts of Globalization on Employment Relations in Nigeria' [2014] (2)(3) *Nigerian Journal of Labour and Industrial Relations*, 45.

[9] A M Jega, 'The Impact of Labour Casualisation on Trade Union Organisation in Nigeria' [2007] (3)(1) *African Journal of Industrial Relations*, 66.

[10] C C Duru, 'Legal Regulation of Precarious Work in Nigeria: A Comparative Study with South Africa' [2020] (9)(2) *Nigerian Journal of Comparative Labour Law*, 103.

[11] K N Ibekwe, 'The Casualisation Phenomenon: A Threat to Job Security in Nigeria' [2011] (5)(1) *Labour and Society*, 59.

[12] A B Sulaimon, 'Labour Flexibility or Exploitation? A Critical Appraisal of Casualisation in Nigeria' [2018] (14)(2) *African Journal of Legal Thought*, 121.

[13] E U Okolie, 'The Prevalence of Non-Standard Work in Nigeria: Legal Challenges and Policy Options' [2015] (6)(3) *Labour Law and Policy Review*, 78.

## 2. Conceptual Clarification

This section examines some relevant concepts.

### 2.1 Worker

Upex[14] defines a worker as an individual who is engaged under a contract of employment, or under any other form of contract, whether express or implied, oral or written, through which the individual agrees to personally perform work or services for another party, provided that the other party is not, by virtue of the contract, a client or customer of a profession or business operated by the individual. In labour law, the terms "worker" and "employee" are often used interchangeably.

According to the Black's Law Dictionary, a worker is defined to mean any person who agrees to work in the service of another person called the employer under an agreement which may be express or implied.[15]The purpose of the contract is for the worker to work for the employer in consideration for the employer's agreement to pay the worker wages. Under the Labour Act, a worker is seen as any person who has entered into or works under a contract with an employer. Such contract could be in writing or orally made and may be express or implied.[16]

The concept 'worker' does not apply to a person who is not employed to work for another person for the purpose of that person's business.[17] Similarly, persons exercising administrative, executive, executive, technical or professional functions as public officers are not included in the definition of workers. Also, members of the employer's family, such as his wife, children, parents and so forth are excluded from being categorized as workers.[18] There are other categories of persons excluded from the definition of 'worker' such as sale representatives and agents, artisans and skilled workmen who work as independent persons; and persons employed in a vessel or aircraft to which the laws regulating merchant shipping or civil aviation applies.[19] Selwyn consider the term 'worker' to mean anyone who works for a living and would thus include all from a managing director of a large public company to a machine operator in an engineering factory; a bookmaker's clerk on a race track to a surgeon in a hospital.[20] A worker is an individual who works or seeks to work under a contract of employment or, under any other contract whereby he undertakes to do or perform personally any work or services for another party to the contract who is not a professional client of his or, is in an employment under or for the purposes of a government department (otherwise than as a member of the armed forces) in so far as such employment does not come within the above.[21]

### 2.2 Casual Worker

A casual worker is an individual employed on a non-permanent, irregular, or short-term basis, often without the full benefits, protections, or entitlements enjoyed by regular employees.[22] The defining feature of casual employment is its temporary and uncertain nature, workers are typically engaged only when needed, and their services can be terminated without prior notice or compensation. Unlike permanent staff, casual workers may not be entitled to pensions, paid leave, medical benefits, job security, or union representation. This employment arrangement is prevalent in industries requiring flexible labour, such as construction, agriculture, hospitality, telecommunications, and even the formal corporate sector.[23]

Under Nigerian labour law, the concept of a casual worker is not explicitly and comprehensively defined, which has led to wide employer discretion and legal ambiguity. The Labour Act Cap L1 Laws of the

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[14] R Upex and Others, *Labour Law* (Oxford University Press 2004) 66.
[15] B A Garner (ed), *Black's law Dictionary* (8th edn, New York, Thomson West 2004) 564.
[16]Labour Act, Cap L1, LFN 2004, s 91(1).
[17]*Ibid.*
[18]*Ibid*.
[19] *Ibid*, s 91(1).
[20] N M Selwyn, *Selwyn's Law of Employment* (14th edn, Oxford University Press 2006) 39.
[21] Selwyn (n 20).
[22] A B Sulaimon, 'Labour Flexibility or Exploitation? A Critical Appraisal of Casualisation in Nigeria' [2018] (14)(2) *African Journal of Legal Thought*, 121.
[23] E U Okolie, 'The Prevalence of Non-Standard Work in Nigeria: Legal Challenges and Policy Options' [2015] (6)(3) *Labour Law and Policy Review*, 78.

Federation of Nigeria 2004 makes reference to temporary or daily-rated workers, particularly under section 7(1), which requires an employer to provide written terms of employment only after three months of continuous service. This gap allows many employers to keep workers in perpetual casual status, thereby avoiding statutory obligations.[24] Casual workers in Nigeria are therefore highly vulnerable, with limited access to redress mechanisms in the face of exploitation, arbitrary dismissal, and unsafe working conditions.

### 2.3 Casualisation

Casualization refers to the process by which employment shifts from being predominantly permanent and full-time to being short-term, contract-based, or otherwise precarious.[25] In labour law, casualization is typically understood as the increasing reliance on temporary, part-time, outsourced, or informal labour, often with limited legal protection, social security, or job security.[26] The casualization of labour is driven by several interrelated factors. Globalization is one of them. As companies compete globally, there is increasing pressure to reduce labour costs, prompting reliance on casual or contract workers.[27] Technological change is a second factor. Automation and digital platforms have facilitated the growth of the gig economy, where work is often temporary and performed on demand. Labour market deregulation is a third factor. In many jurisdictions, reforms aimed at labour market flexibility have weakened the protections for full-time workers, making it easier to hire and fire. Employer cost reduction strategies is a fourth factor. Employers use casual labour to avoid paying long-term employment benefits, pensions, and severance.[28]

Casualization has far-reaching socio-economic consequences. For workers, it often means a lack of income stability, fewer career advancement opportunities, and greater vulnerability to exploitation.[29] For society, it contributes to economic inequality, reduces consumer purchasing power, and may lead to social unrest. From a macroeconomic perspective, widespread casualization can undermine productivity and long-term growth, as workers may have less incentive to invest in skills or remain committed to an organization. It also places pressure on public welfare systems, as individuals without employer-provided benefits turn to the state for support.[30]

Critics argue that casualization undermines the fundamental objectives of labour law, which include protecting workers from the imbalance of power in employment relationships and promoting social justice.[31] It is seen as a way for employers to evade their legal obligations and shift risks onto workers. In response, some jurisdictions have introduced legal reforms aimed at curbing the abuse of casual labour.[32] These include: requiring equal pay for equal work, regardless of employment status, imposing limits on the duration or renewability of fixed-term contracts, recognizing a presumption of employment in certain gig economy platforms and providing pathways for casual workers to transition into permanent roles.[33]

## 3. The Rise of Casual Work in Nigeria

In Nigeria, the scourge of casualization of employment is gaining grounds in an unprecedented proportion. The increase in the spread and gradual acceptance of this labour practice in the Nigerian

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[24] Labour Act 2004, s 7(1).

[25] S Fajana, 'Industrial Relations in the Oil Industry in Nigeria' [2005] (1)(2) *African Journal of Business and Economic Research*, 153.

[26] *Ibid*.

[27] M Freedland and N Kountouris, 'The Legal Construction of Personal Work Relations' [2011](5)(1) *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, 26.

[28] D Otobo, 'The Casualisation of Labour in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges' [2010] (9)(2) *Labour Law Review of Nigeria*, 22.

[29] A O Idowu, 'A Legal Examination of Outsourcing and Casualisation of Labour in Nigeria' [2016] (4)(2) *International Journal of Law and Legal Jurisprudence Studies,* 1.

[30] *Ibid*.

[31] F Adewumi, 'Trade Union Responses to Globalisation: A Case Study of the Nigerian Labour Congress' [2009] (2)(1) *International Journal of Labour Research*, 103.

[32] D McCann, 'Regulating Informal Work: Decent Work, the Labour Inspection and the Limits of Labour Law' [2008] (52) *International Journal of Comparative Labour Law and Industrial Relations*, 89.

[33] *Ibid*.

labour market has become an issue of great concern to stakeholders. Employers of labour are increasingly filling positions in their organizations that are supposed to be permanent with casual employees.[34] The problem of casualization is common in Nigeria. However, it has been a long outstanding issue in the oil/gas, banking industries and multinational corporations. In some companies in Nigeria, it is possible for one to get workers as many as 2000 in an industry, out of which about 1500 may be casual workers.[35] In some local industries, in the informal sector, it is possible to get situations whereby virtually all the employees are casual staff.[36]

The casual workers have either professional or administrative skills.[37] Data on casual workers is quite alarming. In the oil and gas sub-sector alone, there are over 1000 casual workers, who are unionized against the wishes of management and, also, being discriminated against by management. Specifically, in 2001, there were an estimated 14, 559 casual/contract workers, as against 23,065 junior workers on permanent job positions in the oil industry.[38] Most of the casual workers have various qualification that would warrant permanent jobs-certificates, diplomas and degrees in such areas as engineering, computer science, telecommunication and accounting.[39] Some of the permanent jobs where casual workers were being utilized in the industry include clerical jobs, plant operations, computer services, rig drilling operations, maintenance services, transportation, flow station operations, flow station guards, deck-hands, forklift operators, typists and fire service men.[40]

## 4. Causes of Labour Casualization

Labour casualization is the growing practice by employers to engage workers under temporary, flexible, or non-permanent employment arrangements instead of offering them standard, permanent contracts. This phenomenon has become a significant feature of modern employment relationships across many sectors, fueling growing concern among workers, unions, and policy makers alike. The casualization of labour is not a spontaneous process; it emerges from a combination of economic, legal, and organizational factors. This section examines some of the causes of labour casualization.

### 4.1 Lack of Clarity in Labour Laws

The Nigerian Labour Act defined only one category of worker. Thus, any person who has entered into or works under a contract with an employer, whether the contract is for manual labour or clerical work or is expressed or implied or oral or written, and whether it is a contract of service or a contract personally to execute any work or labour. From the foregoing, workers in non-standard work arrangements are not recognised. This is attributable to the non-recognition of non-standard work arrangement when the Labour Act was enacted.

### 4.2 Unemployment

Further worsening the case of workers casualisation, is the high rate of unemployment especially among Nigerian graduates, some of whom hold Master/Doctorate Degrees. Casual labour is most preferred by the average employer (including multinational companies) as it is cheaper compared to employment of a permanent nature in terms of less wages, allowances and entitlements of the employee. This scenario

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[34] T M Fapohunda, 'Employment Casualization and Degradation of Work in Nigeria'[2012](3)(9) *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 257-267.

[35] E E Okafor, 'Sociological Investigation of the use of Casual Workers in Selected Asian Firms in Lagos, Nigeria' [2010](8)(1) *Ibadan Journal of the Social Sciences*, 17-31.

[36] *Ibid*.

[37] E Okougbo, *Strategic Issue on the Dynamic of Industrial Relations: Theory and Practice* (Lagos: Wepoapo Enterprises 2004) 89.

[38] E E Okafor, 'Sociological Investigation of the use of Casual Workers in Selected Asian Firms in Lagos, Nigeria' [2010](8)(1) *Ibadan Journal of the Social Sciences*, 17-31.

[39] A Olatubosun, 'Safety of Oil and Gas Workers in Nigeria- Fiction or Reality?' [200] (5) (1) *Modern Practice Journal of Finance and Investment Law*, 72.

[40] A A Adenugba, 'Economic Globalization and Trade Unionism in Nigeria: A case Study of the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC)' (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ibadan, 2006).

makes the employers believe that they will always have people willing, ready and available to work for them irrespective of the conditions.[41]

### 4.3 Increase in Capital Mobility and Deregulation of the Labour Market

Increase in capital mobility and deregulation of the labour market has resulted to instability of the Nigerian economy thereby leading to the soaring heights of casualization of workers. The average Nigerian on his part, would prefer being a casual worker to being unemployed, as the latter case is worse. Trade liberalization has also made way for competing imports into the economy and consequently results to lots of instability in the product market. The outcome being the predominance of casual workers.[42]

### 4.4 Globalisation

The process of globalization, marked by growing interconnectedness, international competition, and the free flow of capital, goods, and services, has profoundly influenced employment relationships across the world. Globalisation is a major driver of labour casualization, as companies increasingly prioritize flexibility, cost-efficiency, and competitiveness in a fast-changing market. One key way globalization contributes to labour casualization is by putting pressure on firms to reduce production costs. In a world where companies compete with producers across borders, there's a strong incentive to cut expenses and labour is often the first place these cuts are made. This results in a growing reliance on temporary, casual, or contingent employment instead of permanent, full-time jobs. Casual employment allows firms to respond quickly to changing market conditions, avoiding financial pressures associated with redundancy payments, health care benefits, and other employment-related costs.[43]

### 4.5 Privatisation

The increase in casualisation of workers is also attributable to government policy of privatization, which has led to the transfer of some services in the public sector to private organisations. A good example is the privatization of the power sector by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The private sector on its part, employ workers mostly on a temporary basis (without job security), in order to maximize their profits by cutting down the cost of running the organisation.[44]

## 5. Implications of Labour Casualization

Engagement of large attendants of the workforce based on casualization has become a burden in the industries in Nigeria. Workers are recruited at the gate and fired at will daily. Although these workers continue to generate enormous profits for various establishments, they remain classified as casuals and are subjected to deplorable and inhumane working conditions.[45]

The implications of labour casualization are multi-faceted and heterogeneous. The workers may be the direct victims of casualization, but the effects they suffer transcend through a flow-on process to other actors in the economy. Collective bargaining is under threat as there is increased job insecurity and one can be easily laid off without any notification. The effects of casualization on an employer will also include; the high cost of recruitment, interviewing and hiring. Solaja[46] estimates that it costs about 33 per cent of any new employee's salary to replace a worker who left. On the economy, Hall[47] submits that

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[41] E Okougbo, *Strategic Issues on the Dynamics of Industrial Relations: Theory & Practice* (Lagos: Publishers Wepoapo Enterprises, 2004) 19.

[42] E A Kenen, 'Trade Union Laws and Labour Relations in Nigeria: A Critical Examination' [2019] *Benue State University Law Journal,* 90.

[43] P Auerbach, 'Firms, Competitiveness and the Global Economy' in Mackintosh and Others (eds) *Economics and Changing Economies* (The Open University, London).

[44] J Nelson, 'The Private Sector and Aid Effectiveness: Toward New Models of Engagement' in H Kharas (ed) *Catalyzing Development: A New Vision for Aid* (Woojin Press 2011) 83.

[45] *Ibid.*

[46] O M Solaja, 'Labour Casualization and Trade Unionism in Nigeria' [2015](7)(4) *International Journal of Information, Business, and Management,* 28.

[47] R Hall, 'Outsourcing, Contracting-out, and Labour-hire: Implications for Human Resource Development in Australian Organizations' [2020](38) *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resource,* 23-41.

casualization may have negative effects on important aspects of national economic performance such as skill formation and development.

The division between casual and permanent employment has led to an increased level of labour market segmentation. The increased labour market segmentation has created inferior and stereotyped jobs. This has created dissections between workers where some now consider their jobs more important than others. This has affected the morale of the workers (casual) and subjected them to ill-treatment and isolation. Peer support and cooperation have also suffered due to possible resentment by casual staff against the superior industrial conditions enjoyed by others. There is some evidence that the increasing precariousness of work (of which casualization forms a part) leaves workers more vulnerable to workplace bullying, and certainly to more managerial control.[48]

## 6. Casualization and Economic Growth

Casualization as a growing economic phenomenon has a significant and complex relationship with economic growth in Nigeria. At its core, casualization reflects the struggles of firms to cut costs and maximize profits in a challenging economic climate, but its effects ripple through the broader economy in ways that undermine sustainable growth.[49] One major way casualization impacts economic growth is by reducing the financial stability and purchasing power of a large segment of the workforce. Casual workers typically earn low pay, lack employment benefits, and do not enjoy health care, pension contributions, or redundancy payments.[50] This weak financial position directly dampens their ability to consume and invest, thereby shrinking the domestic market for goods and services. Without strong consumer spending, businesses suffer from reduced sales, profits diminish, and the momentum for further investment and expansion weakens, which collectively dampens the trajectory of economic growth.[51]

Furthermore, casual employment contributes to growing income inequality and social unrest, both of which undermine a stable business environment. Rising inequality erodes social cohesion and can manifest in strikes, industrial disputes, and policy uncertainty — all factors that make the country less attractive for both domestic and international investors. This climate of uncertainty further dampens enterprise formation and expansion, adding a additional constraint to sustained economic growth. The casualization of labour also dampens human capital development.[52]

## 7. Challenges of Casualization of Labour in Nigeria

Casualisation of labour in Nigeria has grown into a systemic employment practice with deep legal, economic, and social consequences. While it allows employers to maintain flexibility in workforce management, it poses significant risks to the rights, welfare, and productivity of workers. The challenges arising from this practice are multifaceted, affecting job security, access to benefits, trade unionism, mental well-being, and national economic performance.

### 7.1 Lack of Job Security

A central challenge associated with the casualisation of labour in Nigeria is the absence of job security. Casual employment, by its very nature, is temporary, precarious, and terminable at short notice without the procedural safeguards available to permanent employees.[53] The Nigerian Labour Act requires that a worker who has been in continuous employment for more than three months must be given a written contract of employment specifying the terms of engagement. However, many employers deliberately

[48] Hall (n 47).
[49] S Danesi, 'The Impact of Casual Employment on Employees' Rights and Security in the Oil and Gas Sector in Niger Delta, Nigeria' [2015](6)(6) *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences,* 79-91.
[50] *Ibid*.
[51] *Ibid*.
[52] A C Onyekwuluje, 'Casualization of Labour and Economic Inequality in Nigeria' [2020](5)(1) *Journal of Finance and Economic Development*, 47–62.
[53] A E Ezeani, 'Labour Market Reforms and Employment Casualisation in Nigeria' [2002] (4)(2) *Journal of African Employment Studies*, 88.

rotate casual staff before the completion of this period to avoid conferring contractual rights.[54] This practice denies workers the assurance of continued employment and leaves them vulnerable to arbitrary dismissal.

The lack of security prevents workers from making long-term financial or personal plans, undermines their sense of stability, and often results in a climate of fear in the workplace.[55] It also reduces employee loyalty and commitment, as workers have little incentive to invest emotionally or professionally in an organisation that could sever their engagement without notice. From a broader economic perspective, insecure employment limits household purchasing power and discourages investment in skills development, thereby negatively impacting national productivity.[56] The insecurity inherent in casualisation is thus both a labour rights issue and a macroeconomic concern.

### 7.2 Denial of Employment Benefits

Another major challenge arising from the casualisation of labour in Nigeria is the systematic denial of employment benefits that are ordinarily enjoyed by permanent staff. Such benefits include paid annual leave, sick leave, medical insurance, pension contributions, gratuities, and severance pay.[57] Casual workers are often excluded from these entitlements because employers classify them as "non-permanent" and therefore outside the scope of collective agreements or statutory protections. The Nigerian Labour Act contains provisions for certain benefits, such as annual leave after twelve months of continuous service, but the irregular and short-term nature of casual work makes it difficult for employees to meet these thresholds.[58]

This denial of benefits has both economic and social implications. Workers without paid leave are forced to work even when ill, risking further health complications and reduced productivity.[59] The absence of pension and social security coverage also heightens the vulnerability of casual workers in old age, perpetuating cycles of poverty. Furthermore, the discriminatory allocation of benefits between casual and permanent workers performing similar tasks contravenes the principles of equal pay for equal work as promoted by the International Labour Organization (ILO).[60] In effect, the denial of employment benefits entrenches inequality in the workplace and undermines the goal of decent work in Nigeria's labour market.

### 7.3 Inability to Unionise

A further challenge linked to the casualisation of labour in Nigeria is the inability of casual workers to freely join or form trade unions. Although section 40 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) guarantees the right to freedom of association,[61] employers often impose contractual restrictions or use intimidation to prevent casual employees from unionising.[62] In some instances, casual workers are deliberately kept outside formal staff lists to exclude them from union membership eligibility. This weakens their bargaining power, making them more susceptible to poor wages, unsafe working conditions, and arbitrary dismissal.

The inability to unionise denies casual workers the collective voice necessary to challenge exploitative practices.[63] Trade unions play a crucial role in negotiating better terms of employment, ensuring compliance with labour standards, and securing legal representation for aggrieved workers. Without

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[54] I O Agomo, *Nigerian Employment and Labour Relations Law and Practice* (Lagos: Concept Publications, 2011).

[55] K N Ibekwe, 'The Casualisation Phenomenon: A Threat to Job Security in Nigeria' [2011] (5)(1) *Labour and Society*, 59.

[56] D A Oyeyemi, 'Professional Casualisation in the Nigerian Oil Sector: Legal and Ethical Concerns' [2019] (7)(1) *Nigerian Journal of Labour Law*, 41.

[57] S E Omodia, 'The Politics of Labour Casualisation and Its Implications for Employee Welfare in Nigeria' [2012] (3)(1) *Nigerian Journal of Industrial Relations*, 101.

[58] C I Chukwu, *The Legal Implications of Casual Labour in Nigeria* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing, 2017).

[59] J M Eze, 'Health and Productivity Risks in Casual Employment' [2018] (6)(2) *African Journal of Labour and Development Studies*, 73.

[60] International Labour Organization, *Equal Pay: An Introductory Guide* (Geneva: ILO, 2013).

[61] CFRN 1999, s 40.

[62] E O Ogunyemi, 'Trade Union Rights and Casual Employment in Nigeria' [2015] (4)(2) *Journal of African Labour Law*, 92.

[63] J A Fashoyin, 'Industrial Relations and Collective Bargaining in Nigeria: A Review' [2010] (2)(1) *Nigerian Journal of Employment Relations*, 17.

access to these structures, casual workers operate in isolation, leaving them at the mercy of employer discretion. The situation is further compounded by the fact that many casual workers fear retaliation, such as non-renewal of contracts, if they attempt to organise.[64] Ultimately, this restriction undermines the principles of industrial democracy and perpetuates structural inequality in Nigeria's labour market.

### 7.4 Psychological and Emotional Effects on Workers

The casualisation of labour in Nigeria also exerts profound psychological and emotional tolls on affected workers. The uncertainty surrounding contract renewal, coupled with the absence of job security and benefits, often leads to heightened anxiety, stress, and a diminished sense of self-worth.[65] Many casual workers live under the constant fear of sudden dismissal, which can create chronic mental strain and negatively impact overall productivity.[66]

Beyond individual well-being, casualisation erodes workplace morale. When workers perceive that their contributions are undervalued compared to permanent staff performing similar duties, resentment and disengagement can arise.[67] This climate of dissatisfaction fosters high turnover rates, undermines organisational loyalty, and discourages workers from investing their best efforts in their roles. Furthermore, the financial instability associated with casual employment often forces workers to take on multiple jobs, leading to physical exhaustion and burnout. The cumulative effect is not merely personal hardship but a systemic weakening of the workforce's capacity to contribute optimally to national development.[68] From a human rights perspective, such psychological and emotional impacts contravene the International Labour Organization's Decent Work Agenda, which emphasises the promotion of dignity, equality, and fair treatment in employment.[69]

### 7.5 Impact on National Productivity and Development

The widespread casualisation of labour in Nigeria has significant implications for national productivity and socio-economic development. Casual workers, lacking security of tenure and adequate motivation, are often less committed to long-term organisational goals.[70] This reduced commitment can lead to lower productivity levels, as employees may focus only on immediate tasks without developing the skills or institutional knowledge necessary for innovation and efficiency.[71]

From a macroeconomic perspective, the prevalence of low-paying and insecure jobs limits workers' purchasing power, thereby reducing domestic consumption and weakening aggregate demand. Such conditions also contribute to income inequality, which can exacerbate social tensions and hinder inclusive economic growth.[72] Additionally, casualisation often results in underinvestment in employee training and capacity building, as employers are reluctant to invest in workers who may leave at short notice. This neglect undermines the development of a skilled labour force, which is essential for Nigeria's industrialisation and global competitiveness. The cumulative effect is a labour market characterised by instability and underperformance, with long-term consequences for the country's ability to achieve sustainable development goals.[73] Addressing casualisation is therefore not merely a labour rights issue but an economic imperative.

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[64] M A Adewumi, *The Dynamics of Labour Relations in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 2012).
[65] S K Olatunji, 'The Psychological Costs of Precarious Employment' [2017] (5)(1) *Journal of Social and Behavioural Studies*, 88.
[66] P O Idowu, *Employment Precarity and Worker Well-being in Nigeria* (Lagos: Malthouse Press, 2019).
[67] T M Emeh, 'Workplace Morale and Casual Employment: A Case Study of Nigerian Industries' [2016] (8)(2) *African Journal of Management Research*, 42.
[68] O A Ogunbameru, *Industrial Sociology* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 2004).
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## CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

The casualisation of labour in Nigeria reflects deeper structural weaknesses in the nation's labour market, legal framework, and economic management. While employers often justify casual employment as a cost-saving measure and a response to market uncertainties, the practice has far-reaching consequences for workers' rights, industrial harmony, and national productivity. It fosters job insecurity, limits access to benefits, undermines unionisation, and generates adverse psychological effects that diminish both individual well-being and organisational performance.

At the macroeconomic level, casualisation weakens human capital development, reduces consumer purchasing power, and perpetuates inequality, all of which threaten the nation's socio-economic stability. Addressing this challenge requires more than rhetorical commitment; it demands deliberate legislative reform, stronger enforcement of existing labour laws, and the adoption of international best practices that balance the interests of employers and employees. Ultimately, the Nigerian state, employers, trade unions, and civil society must work collaboratively to curb exploitative employment practices and promote decent work. A fair and equitable labour system is not merely a matter of legal compliance but a prerequisite for sustainable national development and social justice. It is recommended that the National Assembly amend the Labour Act to clearly define and regulate casual employment, including stipulations on the maximum duration of such arrangements and the mandatory conversion of workers to permanent status after a set period. Also, the Ministry of Labour and Employment should strengthen inspection mechanisms and impose sanctions on employers who abuse casual contracts to circumvent statutory obligations.

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