A Critical Appraisal of Motives Underpinning Managerial Capture of Employee Voice in Nigeria's Petroleum and Banking Sectors

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Abstract

This study is a critical appraisal of managerial capture of employee voice in unionised and non-unionised employee representation (NERs) setting, by empirically gauging how employees' voice is marginalised/suppressed via the instrumentality of managerialism, which underpins motive for such nature and process of employer-employee relationship and engagement. Using the lens of selected firms in Nigeria's petroleum and banking sectors, this study hopes to deepen insights into ''critical turn'' to employment relations practices (and employee voice literature) as proposed by Karen Legge via critical discourse analysis (CDA) of empirical data gathered from interviews with managerial and non-managerial staffs across three organisations from the above sectors. Essentially, CDA enables relational analysis to locate association existing amongst lexical elements, organisational discourses (such as employee engagement, voice and empowerment) and broader cultural, institutional, political and social issues including patrimony, corruption, lack of collegiality and poor corporate-stakeholder relations, which are antithetical to employee voice in Nigeria. Consequently, this study demonstrates that the motives underpinning how Nigerian organisations engage employees in employment relations are rather self-seeking (organisational economic and strategic interests), non-participatory and exclusive, which finds expression in managerial capture of employees' voice, a metonymy for disengagement, disempowerment and lack of representation.

Key words: Employment Relations, Employee Voice, Managerial Capture, Managerialism, CDA and Nigeria

Introduction

The objective of this study is to '***critically explore various motives underpinning managerial capture of employee voice***, using the lens of corporate practices in the Nigerian employment relations that is widely criticised for stakeholder's voice marginalisation (Fajana, 2009). Extant literature on employee relations and engagement (Tangirala and Ramanujam, 2008; Pohler and Luchak, 2014) has amply demonstrated that there is clear dissonance in employee engagement mechanisms and apparent disparity between levels and dimensions of employees' input in

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organisational decision-making process as against inputs from the management (Milliken and Tatge, 2016). This palpable contradiction in the processes of employer-employee relations, which stifles employee voice, can be regarded as **managerial capture** (power, 1991) of employee voice (Hirschman, 1970). The above has compelled a rethinking on how to stimulate better employer-employee relations for mutual engagement, communication and management of relationship between employees and the management (Mowbray, Wilkinson and Tse, 2015). Importantly, the above re-conceptualisation resonates with Karen Legge's (1995, 2005) call to widen the topography of HRM and employment relations to be more critical, robust and less prescriptive, for more nuanced understanding of employee voice dynamics. Widening this field of study and research as Watson (2004) noted aligns with seeking alternative voice that can pluralise and diversify ways of apprehending organisational practice and managerial conducts in workplace.

As contended by Greenwood (2002), critical perspective to HRM-related studies have the potential to ''see HRM as rhetorical and manipulative and as a tool of management to control the workers … HRM practices are considered ways of intervening in an employee's life in order to get employees sacrifice more of themselves to the needs of the organisation'' (p. 264). This is crucial on the hills of employee relations history, which has been draped with draconian measures in addressing trade union movement – employer-employee engagement – to clobber opposition and institutionalise a culture of employee voice capture (MacLeord and Clarke, 2009), which is a correlate of managerial capture (Power, 1991). While Employee voice (EV) has gained prominence due to its promise of engendering better employer-employee engagement (Kaufman, 2014), the concept has revolved to negate the silence and marginalisation of employees' in employment relations (Hirschman, 1970). EV (which is traditionally facilitated via unions or non-unionised employee representations - NERs) has been defined as the ability to create an enabling environment in which employees are able to collectively ventilate their thoughts (Wilkinson and Fay, 2011), deliberate on related matters that may impede work performance, inputs in what concerns them and to seek alternative order for more participatory employer-employee relations (Heinecken, 2010). Thus, the kernel of employee voice is premised on employee engagement via democratised discursive space and multiple channels of communication, information sharing and dissemination, a process that fosters constructive feedback mechanism within which employees can proffer ideas which can be instrumental to organizational success (Newcombe, 2012; Mowbray, Wilkinson and Tse, 2015).

In furthering this enrichment process, the present study focuses essentially on considering the interface of managerial capture – to shed light on how employee voice is disabled and marooned by managerial capture, which is an organisational instrument that makes stakeholders' engagement, inclusion and inputs in the decisional process difficult (O'Dwyer, 2003) if not impossible (Heinecken, 2010). This is done via control of information flow, communication dissemination (Baker, 2010) and stakeholders input in the debate that concerns them, which is antithetical to employee voice (Milliken and Tatge, 2016). The above contention has been supported by numerous studies in the Nigerian context that have provided glaring manifestation of how employee voice is marginalised, silenced and captured by providers of

labour in Nigeria (Ubeku, 1983; Otobo, 2007; Fajana et al., 2011; Okwu and Jaja, 2014), hence the need to rethink this concept. At the heart of this rethinking (of employee voice dynamic) is an attempt to challenge various **motives** underpinning strategies and mechanics via which employees and employers relate and engage for participatory and collegial relationship (Heinecken, 2010; Hirschman, 1970).

This mode of inquiry hallmarks CDA, which is used in this study for analysing empirical data gathered from interviews with managerial and non-managerial staffs across three organisations (each) from the Nigeria's banking and petroleum sectors. CDA ruptures the continuum of one-dimensional approach to conceiving, interpreting and analysing reality by enabling polyvocal, democratic slant of organisational discourse (Wodak and Meyer, 2009; Fairclough, 2014). CDA enables the uncovering of language functions including the overshadowing of communication and engagement process as well as textual relationship, which "are genres in which organisations reproduce power relationships through constituting ideologies discursively'' (Putnam & Fairhurst, 2001: 111), in the manner that often culminate in hegemonic textual construction (of employee voice – managerial capture). Thus, managerial capture can be dissected via uncovering relationship between lexical patterns within text corpuses, in socio-corporate discourse; hence lexicalization is implicated in ideology that houses cultural values and belief system (Dijk, 2008) in a specific social space. Lexis is an amount of linguistic coding in text formation in which truth can be embodied (or distorted).

Consequently, this study's approach to re-conceptualisation bordering on theoretical refinement and methodological predilection – anchored in the combination of interview data and CDA analysis (which is a rare approach is hoped) – will offer more nuanced method of understanding the concept of employee voice relative to managerial capture, particularly in the Nigerian employment terrain that is severely under-researched (theoretically and methodologically) (Idiagbon-oke and Oke, 2011). The remainder of this study will be structured as follow; context, premise and theoretical consideration; redrawing the map of employee voice, which is followed by methodology of study, discussion of findings, theoretical interpretation, summary and conclusion, implications and contributions of the study and suggestions for further research.

Research Context, Premises and theoretical consideration

Employment relations discourse in developing countries is largely assumed to be awash with poor stakeholder's voice and engagement dilemma, a situation which is in high gear in Nigeria' work terrain (Ubeku, 1983; Otobo, 2007; Fajana, et al., 2011; Okwu and Jaja, 2014), particularly across the banking and petroleum sectors (Idemudia, 2010; Frynas, 2009), which are currently being reviewed in this study. Widely engaged by research studies, these are considered the leading sectors in Nigeria in terms of labour and employment provision, with the petroleum sector in particular generating over 50% of GDP, 95% of foreign exchange earnings, and about 80% of budgetary revenues (Erapi, 2011). These sectors are dominated by

multinationals, who are largely shareholders profit maximisation centric, hence their preference for flexible work systems and alternative mode of employee representations, which allows them room to entrench their predetermined agenda, via the silencing of stakeholder (employees) voice (Idiagbon-Oke and Oke, 2011). The above contention is consistent with the widely acclaimed absence of representative leadership, responsive governance and dwindling unions' relevance as well as rising unemployment in the country, which hinders employees bargaining power and voice prospect against the providers of labour (Achua, 2008; Erapi, 2011).

To this end, this current study hopes to explore how employers (and their agents) in Nigeria stifles effort in facilitating participatory employer-employee engagement, for efficacious employee voice. Indeed, glaring manifestation of employees' marginalisation and capture are well documented in Nigeria (Fajana, 2009). Cases such as the proscription of Natural Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas (NUPENG) and Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU) among other cases illustrate this form of capture and showcase the tempestuous employers-employees relationship in Nigeria (Otobo, 2007; Okpu, 2016). A remarkable factor that underpins this lack of participatory relationship between employers and employees in Nigeria is the preponderance of military government since Nigeria's political independence in 1960 and its subsequent republic status in 1963 (Fajana, 2009). The military juntas have ruled Nigeria and its political, economic and social strata using highhanded leadership style, which is a concomitant of tyrannical employment relations. The pockets of civilian administrations in Nigeria have never deviated from this political-history (Nwagbara, Pidomson & Nwagbara, 2014).

Accordingly, this un-cordial mode of employer-employee relationship stemmed from Nigeria's cultural-environmental dynamic of high power distance (Umar and Hassan, 2014), which endorses superior-subordinate relationship as well as patrimonial structure and elite-salving system that rather serves the need and aspiration of the capitalists – providers of labour – at the expense of workers (Ikpe, 2000; Oyelere, 2014), which denotes managerial capture of employee voice. As noted in the introductory section, the provenance of managerial capture is managerialism, which can be traced back some decades ago. However, managerial capture came into existence following Power's (1991) paper, which describes how management establishments deploy strategic motives to employment relations practices, which are antithetical to participatory employee voice and engagement. Thus, managerial capture parallels how management of organisations (in Nigeria) frustrate every attempt to trigger participatory, collective and inclusive engagement between them and employees (Heinecken, 2010). This is done through management's control of how information and communication is disseminated and shared (Baker, 2010) as well as influencing inputs from key stakeholders(employees) in employment relations debate, which tantamount to lack of employee voice (Milliken and Tatge, 2016).

As a consequence, this study takes into cognisance the problematisation and denaturalisation of the **motives** underpinning employee voice dynamic in the Nigerian context of employee relations that is silenced (marginalised) – managerially captured. The above is the contention of this study, which is in tune with the current call for research inquiries to adopt critical. This

will in the final analysis redraw the map of employee relations discourse from the developing countries perspective – such as Nigeria. The following section looks at managerial capture of employee voice.

Redrawing the Map of Employee Voice: Managerialism as Precursor to ''Managerial Capture''

It is necessary to articulate the provenance of managerial capture – managerialism – before apprehending how managerial capture can be appropriated to redraw the map of employee voice literature. Managerialism finds provenance in the philosophical ethos of transaction-cost (organisational economics), public choice notion and agency theory (Power, 1991). This triangulation of philosophical streams – transaction-economics, public choice economics and agency theory – denotes a way of thinking and practice couched in the belief that humans (capitalists) are rational entities propelled by competitive, economic self-interest. Although highly contested, managerialism largely describes organisational quest to achieve a positive result for firms and their shareholders through the instrumentality of strategic streamlining of decision-making procedures, which affords managers greater autonomy and responsibility over employees (Preston, 2001).

In taking this debate further, Pollitt (1990) explained that managerialism is imbedded in mainstream value and mode of thinking universally, which is rationalised within the ambit of the assumption that management is a separate organisational institution that contributes in planning and measuring as well as implementing changes that are requisite for high productivity and organisational performance and contributes to national wealth and prosperity. Thus, in Pollitt's (1990) analysis, managers must be allowed enough space to manage critical issues that have direct bearing with societal prosperity and advancement, via efficiency and control, core elements in managerialism which have come to underscore the ratiocination of modern businesses such as companies in Nigeria's petroleum (idemudia, 2010) and banking sectors (Achua, 2008). This process has correspondence in the matrix and strategies of employer-employee relations in Nigeria, which is replete with palpable forms of power differentials and centralised decision-making system (Fajana, 2009; Otobo, 2007). The above finds resonance in Nigeria's draconian approach and predatory strategies that are aimed at maximising value for shareholders by constricting and disabling alternative voice from employees.

It is within the ambit of this contention that it can be said that managerialism is the precursor to managerial capture, which utilises comparable strategies in stifling employee voice. Thus, in line with the extant literature (Oyelere, 2014; Okpu, 2016), managerial capture in Nigeria's employee relations debate can be characterised by high level of power distance between employers and employees, low level of stakeholder inputs, systematic corporate collaboration with the government for the furtherance of managerial interests (and economically powerful) and the suppression of employee voice (Umar and Hassan, 2014. The methodological approach of this study follows next.

Methodology of Study

Sample size

This study is a qualitative exploration of the underlying motives driving managerial capture of employee voice in the Nigerian employee relations. The main focus here is to use **interview data** to make sense of how employees' voice is marginalised and managerially controlled – managerial capture – by employers in Nigeria, which impinges on the rights and wellbeing of employees. To achieve this, data collected via semi-structured interviews with 22 managerial and non managerial staffs (across Nigeria's banking and petroleum sector) will be qualitatively analysed using critical discourse analysis (CDA). As intimated by Bryman (2012), interview is a purposeful method and discussion format between two or more people, which aids a researcher to collate rich data that are germane to the research aim and objectives (Yin, 2009; Silverman, 2013). The following tables below provide interview briefs, which are coded for ethics and participants' anonymity (Creswell, 2013).

Table 1: Interview Brief

Serial No	Code	Roles	Sex	Educational Level	Experience
Petroleum Sector Firms					
1	PE1	Senior Manager in Petroleum Company	M	MBA	7 years
2	PE2	Middle Manager in Petroleum Company	M	MSc	8 Years
3	PE3	Line Manager in Petroleum Company	F	MSc	8Years
4	PE4	Employee in Petroleum Company	M	HND	4 Years
5	PE5	Employee in Petroleum Company	F	BSc	N/A
6	PE6	Employee in Petroleum Company	M	BSc	5 Years
7	PE7	Employee in Petroleum Company	M	HND	6 Years
8	PE8	Employee in Petroleum Company	F	BSc	5 Years
9	PE9	Employee in Petroleum Company	M	HND	4 Years
10	PE10	Employee in Petroleum Company	M	MSc	6 Years
11	PE11	Employee in Petroleum Company	F	BSc	N/A
Banking Sector Firms					
12	BE1	Senior Manager in Banking Company	M	MSc	7 Years
13	BE2	Middle Manager in Banking Company	F	MBA	8 Years
14	BE3	Line Manager in Banking Company	M	MBA	N/A
15	BE4	Employee in Banking Company	M	BSc	7 years
16	BE5	Employee in Banking Company	F	BSc	8 Years
17	BE6	Employee in Banking Company	F	MSc	6 Years
18	BE7	Employee in Banking Company	M	MSc	6 Years
19	BE8	Employee in Banking Company	M	HND	7 Years
20	BE9	Employee in Banking Company	M	MSc	6 Years
21	BE10	Employee in Banking Company	F	MSc	6 Years
22	BE11	Employee in Banking Company	F	HND	6 Years
Total: 22		**6 Managers, 16Employees**	**M:13/F:9**		**Minimum: 4 Years**

Source: The Researcher (2017)

Research Method and Analytical Framework

This study relies on interpretive-qualitative methodology and ontology of social constructionism, which assumes that human reality is socially constructed by social actors, hence such social actors must be engaged to understand how they construct reality and the underpinning of such construction (Creswell, 2013), which contrasts positivism that is objective and follows scientific procedures (Saunders et al., 2012). In this direction, the study adopts inductive mechanism, which does not test theory – but relied on analysis of collated data, to drive new ideas and future direction of inquiry – relative to the purpose of the existing research (Cresswell, 2013; Silverman, 2013). This approach enables researcher (s) to tease out properties of discourse that portray motives of managerial capture of voice from data gathered from the interviews, which are qualitatively analysed using critical discourse analysis (CDA), to capture the complex social context that firms capitalise on to managerially capture employees voice in Nigeria. CDA is a problem oriented language tool for understanding language constructions, functions and underlying intent - which also can be used to legitimise and sustain existing socio-corporate behaviours (Wodak, 2000, 2001) and ideology that houses cultural values and belief system (Dijk, 2008; Fairclough, 2013). CDA utilises a range of dimensions, but this study will rely on textual analysis of lexical patterning, which explores the amount of linguistic coding in text formation in which truth can be embodied (or distorted). Nevertheless, analysing/appraising lexical patterning in text will be operationalised through relational analysis, which in this context will be semantically explored (Palmquist, Carley and Dale, 1997). Relational analysis (which has bearing with intertextuality) goes beyond realities in the lived world (macro elements) by linking these social realities to organisational practices such as style of employment relations (in Nigeria) (meso elements) and subsequently to textual/linguistic elements (micro elements) (Fairclough, 1992, 2014; Carley and Palmquist, 1992; Wodak and Meyer, 2009). Accordingly, figure 1 illustrates association between texts, organisational practice and social realities.

Figure 6.1: Three-layered Approach to Lexical Patterning

Relational Analytical Framework of CDA Analysis		
Micro Elements of Lexical Patterns Nouns, Verbs, Adverbs and Adjective (or Modifiers) of Control, Disempowerment, marginalisation, Silence, Suppression, Discrimination and Prejudice amongst others	**Meso Elements of Discursive Motives** Discursive Motives of Union Avoidance and Preference for Non-unionised Employee representatives (NERs) Discursive Motives of Disemphasising Profit maximisation Discursive Motives of Disempowering Employees/Unions/NERs	**Macro Elements of Econonmic, Institutional, Political and Social Dynamics** Macro dynamics of Capitalism, Shareholder focus, Shareholding, Profit Maximisation, Power Contestation, Dominance and Patrimonialism

Source: The Researcher (2017)

Therefore, attention will be focused on understanding relationship between lexical patterns in texts as well as their association with themes (to be presented shortly from empirical data), which can be used interpretively to proxy fundamentals of managerialism – managerial capture (Power, 1991). This approach to interpretive research mechanism is the mainstay of this study, which is crucial to uncovering motives underpinning managerial capture of employee voice and how this is legitimised and normalised. The following section presents study's finding.

Discussion of Finding

This section links findings of this study to two themes and four sub-themes, which are considered process of employee voice marginalisation – managerial capture of employee voice. These are *motive of managerialism* (which explores sub-themes of *Nouns of (Managerial) Control* and *Denial of Rights/Suppression*) – and *motive of maximising shareholder value* (which explores sub-themes of *(Verbs of Profit) Maximisation and Poor Working Conditions*). The following section will begin with motives of managerialism.

Motive of Managerialism

This theme looks at the motive of managerialism as demonstrated in texts from interviews conducted. Two sub-themes (nouns of managerial control and nouns of denial of rights/suppression) will be analysed in turn subsequently to apprehend the whole gamut and underpinning of managerial capture of voice (Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012; Bryson, Charlwood and Forth, 2006) by employers in Nigeria (Okpu, 2016). Accordingly, managerialism represents organisational facet of capitalism, neoliberalism, agenda setting, control, high productivity and profit maximisation focus, which impedes employee voice from being heard or taken into account in the organisational decision-making processes (Blackmore,

2010). Thus, in prioritising efficiency and shareholder value maximisation over other values in the workplace, managerialism is inextricably connected with scientific management as propounded by Frederick Taylor (1911). It is therefore vital to apprehend how lexes extracted from interviewees' comments reflect this organisational ideology, hence, language can be used to unmask or shield organisational behaviours, intention and *modus operandi* (Fairclough, 2014). The following section looks at nouns of (managerial) control.

Nouns of (Managerial) Control

Workers' freedom, welfare and working condition are central issues in gauging the barometer of employee voice (realisation) in employment relations (MacLeord and Clarke, 2009) as well as to ascertain incidence of managerial capture of voice (Baker, 2010; Okpu, 2016). This also includes understanding if employees are at liberty to contribute to what concerns them in the decision-making mechanisms, channels and approaches. The absence of these ingredients renders the mode of employment relations managerially captured at best or poor at worst (Kaufman, 2014). According to Hirschman (1970) absence of these factors (and more) could propel employers to exit if their voice is not heard; they also impact on workers' loyalty to an organisation. Some interviewees' viewpoints validate this position:

> What is happening in Nigeria's employment relations is baffling to say the least! Although Nigeria is historically known as a nation that shies away from protecting workers' right, welfare and working condition, the power of control exercised by its employers particularly those in private organisations is extremely inhumane and draconian. They simply see us as **nobodies** (PE2)

> These companies continually tell us to our faces that we're **zombies** in their hands because the government and Nigerian system does not protect us from their fangs given the country's employment terrain and nature of employment relations. To make matter worse, these companies only have the right to say when we can take leave, condition for taking leave and how much Naira we're paid because it's very hard to get a job elsewhere. This kind of situation sours our belly, to use Nigerian pidgin. I personally believe that it's still far away to remedy relations (BE4).

A similar opinion is conveyed here:

> This country is still in the dark ages of employment relations. Imagine? How can you have companies that don't see you as human beings or talk to you as people who deserve basic human rights let alone employment rights? Often, these **bullies** called employers rob it into our noses that we deserve less rights than the owners of the companies, who pay our children's fees, our rents, our foods and clothing (PE01).

> As far as this Ogas are concerned, we are **mumus** and working here is an opportunity to be glorified, not right, as without the company we can't exist. This is a very

disturbing pattern of employer-employee relations in a nation that has enviable quantum of manpower and human capital! (BE5).

Deductively, as has been demonstrated in the excerpts above, words such as ''mumu''(BE5), ''zombies''(BE4), ''nobodies'' (PE2) and ''bullies'' (PE1) as well as ''opportunity'' and ''rights'' give a flavour of managerial control and highhandedness in a context that should be collegial, participatory and engaging (Pohler and Luchak, 2014). *Mumu* is Nigerian slang for foolish person who does not know their rights. As a local lingo, the term is oftentimes used in situations where contestants (employers and employees in this context) have unequal mode of relations and where employers have one-upmanship in relationship exiting between them and employees. This perspective has relationship with words such as *zombies* and nobodies as seen in excerpts above.

Similarly, nouns such as *bullies*, *opportunity* and *rights* denote that these companies control employees rather than engage with them and lead them – they are in this instance mere *bullies*. Leadership has bearing on motivation, people management and commitment, which are vital factors for collegiality and engagement (Nwagbara et al., 2013). In addition, Nigerian employers conceive offering employees work as giving them opportunity, which ought to diminish their (fundamental) employment rights, hence, they are pipers that must dictate the dancing steps in view of government's laxity to intervene in such happenstance (Ubeku, 1983).

The above situation is at the root of Nigeria's patrimonial and elite-salvaging orientation towards employer-employee relations, where might is akin to right (Ikpe, 2000). Against this backdrop, Freeman (1984) have averred that such workplace ambience that prohibits employees from exercising their employment rights is rather counterproductive to the tenets of employment relations grounded on the anvil of managerial influence and interest, which negates the realisation of healthy work environment and adequate inputs from employees (Newcombe, 2012). Comparable perspective is offered here by a manger, ''We as managers are roped in this **vice-grip process** of engaging and managing that gives little or **no room** to use one's creative initiative'' (PE1). Lexes of ''vice-grip'' and ''no room'' further depends the tenacity of managerial control. Here, the nouns ''process'' and ''room'' find relevance when combined with nominal adjective ''vive-grip''.

From a sociolinguistic lens, organisational life is a setting par excellence in which people (employers and employees) or agents in the Bourdieusian sense (Bourdieu, 1977) strive to form and change their vision of workplace reality and by extension – the Nigerian employment world. Thus, such site becomes a world in which people (Nigerian employees) use words as actions symbolising ways to change such organisational practice and how things are done in such settings. It is to this end that Burr (1995, p. 33) stated that ''language itself provides us with a way of structuring our experience of ourselves and the world''. In the following sub-section, nouns of denial of rights/suppression will be analysed.

Nouns of Denial of Rights/Suppression

This sub-theme will be teasing out issues of denial of rights and suppression in the interviews undertaken. In doing this, attention will be focused on locating the nexus between this data and employment relations pattern in Nigeria to appraise managerial capture of employee voice (Bach and Kessler, 2012). In the following extracts, an instantiation of this position is depicted.

> It is glaring that our company is doing all it can to counter taking into account our **inputs** in making decision that concern our welfare and working condition. Recently, there was email around that anybody who refuses to 'dance to the tone' of the company will be sacked without notice. (PE8).

> These companies are to me **cannibals**, who kill and bury. They pay you far less than you deserve, they treat you as shit and they march on you even when you're already on the floor prepared by the government through minimum wage. The labour market has given them the privilege to deal with workers' welfare and rights as well as other issues the way the companies deem appropriate.(BE10)

> Indeed, it is our Oga who decides what's appropriate and reasonable to do in terms of work and private matters. We are not relevant, it's just all about the owners alone! This is not right in the modern workplace, where workers' **autonomy** is not given let alone engage worker on equal terms. We as employees have no say! (BE9).

> One has no choice but to say that Nigeria is in a state of **siege** made possible by employers, who are constantly harassing and bullying workers because their rights are not protected by the government and the employment laws prevalent in Nigeria. Workers are constantly in danger of losing their jobs and related packages (BE10).

> Looking at the situation, I realised that employees are in a **hot soup** cooked by the Nigerian state and served to us by our various employers (PE10).

The above extracts are replete with a litany of nouns of control. Words such as ''hot soup'' (PE10), ''siege'' (BE10), ''cannibals'' (BE9) ''[lack of] 'autonomy'' (BE9) and ''[lack of] 'inputs'' (PE8) and BE9 are consistent with managerial control and exclusion, which denotes managerial capture of employee voice and engagement (Macey and Schneider, 2008) in the Nigerian employment relations (Okpu, 2016). These lexical elements suggest that at the heart of nouns of control is managerially driven agenda to clobber opposition and stifle employee voice from being heard (Pohler and Luchak, 2014;). To buttress the foregoing view points, one manager quipped, ''*What can we do*? *We can't help the situation, we are also employees''*(PE1). Evidently, this scenario painted by the texts above, resonates with negation of collective engagement and democratised mode of engagement for pluralised views on what constitutes fairness, empowerment and workers' right in the Nigerian employment relations. This is because different point of views expressed by PE8, PE10, PE8, BE10 and others give

an indication of intertextuality. Intertextuality – textual and semantic relational association that helps to understand that texts from disparate sources (interviewees) point to same or comparable scenario or situation (Peled-Elhanan, 2010).

Drawing upon CDA via the seminal work of Kristeva's (1980) notion of intertextuality, Fairclough (2014) maintains that each text is a slice of ''mosaic of texts'' (Kristeva, 1980, p. 60). The intertextual mosaic is mapped along the lines of *horizontal intertextuality*, which links a text to other texts in comparable mould and *vertical intertextuality* that links a speaker (interviewee in this context) to readers. This process helps a reader of textual construction to make sense of issues communicated in intertextual (relational) frame. Central to this understanding is that intertextuality also signifies a co-constructed re-mixture, which is continually recreated for cognitive legitimacy (Rodríguez and Basco, 2011). Deductively, intertextuality depends on textual, semantic and modal patterns as well as historicity through which discourses (texts) are intertwined with broader cultural, economic, political and social practices such as capitalism (managerialism or employee voice capture) (Kaufman, 2014; Hirschman, 1970) to have meaning (Wodak and Meyer, 2009; Fairclough, 2014). The following sub-heading addresses motive of maximising shareholder value.

Motive of Maximising Shareholder Value

This theme will be explored by mainly analysing verbs in the interview data to demonstrate they prefigure motive of maximising shareholder value and managerial capture of employee voice – by extension. Two main sub-themes will be subsequently analysed along the axis of interview extracts to operationalise this theme. First, understanding the meaning of shareholder value maximisation and its rationality is vital for the analysis. Maximising shareholder value entails corporate governance system and processes that allow companies to place premium on capital gain and shareholder interest maximisation at the detriment of wider stakeholder interests (Freeman and Medorf, 1984), a contemplation that has remained the norm – although largely mooted by many scholars on the postcolonial Nigerian project (Ubeku, 1983; Fajana, 2009; Otobo, 2016).

This perspective has been identified as ''enlightened self-interest'' approach in business-society relations conundrum (Keim, 1978) and was further advanced in Bakan's (2004) epic work - *The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Powe*r. Therefore, on the ratiocination of organisational capabilities accumulated over decades, corporations generate huge revenues, which are allocated according to a corporate governance blueprint that Lazonick and O'Sullivan (2000) tag ''retain and reinvest'' or "finance capitalism" stratagem for long-term benefit of shareholders – not stakeholders (Hudson, 2012). Thus, many verbs in data from interviews demonstrate the Nigerian dynamic of employment relations – with regards to profit Maximisation verbs, as shall be demonstrated shortly.

Verbs of Profit Maximisation

This sub-theme analyses verbs from interview data that signify profit maximisation orientation of employers in Nigeria (Otobo, 1992, 2016). The following snippets are corralled from interviewees' responses to adumbrate organisational proclivity to make profit for shareholders rather than wider stakeholders:

> This is a competition-driven work environment, profitability and employees' reward is based on performance, which motives employees to **work** harder, in order to **meet** set targets (PE2)

> In this organisation, we try to **drive up** productivity to ensure that the company **stays** afloat and also **pay** employees fair wages. This is why we use alternative voice rather that the counterproductive unions (BE2)

> Voice to employees in this country is simply salary payment. This company has **risked** funds as well as **created** jobs here, employees must be willing to **reciprocate** this gesture, by **committing** to hard work and organisational policy (BE3)

While the above extracts demonstrate attempt to manufacture consent of inclusive, responsible and caring organisations that take the profit interests of both employees and the firms at heart; verbs such as **meet** set target, **Work** harder (PE2), **drive up** productivity, **pay** employees (BE2), **risked** funds, **created** jobs **and committing** to hard work (BE3) denotes justification for profit motives (Hudson, 2012). This motivation leads to poor working conditions and overlabouring of employees, precipitated by a business philosophy sated with maximising shareholder value. According to some respondents:

> They're *murdering our sleep* if we can't balance work and life in a country such as ours, where life expectancy is very shot. These employers *are wasting our wellbeing* just because we're working in a country that supports suppression and utter nonsense! (PE9).

> no rest for us, working Monday to Friday and continue working on the weekend is madness'' (BE11)

As can be gleaned, the above further signals managerial capture (of employee voice) from the context of profit maximisation pursuit by managers, which puts work pressure on employees' wellbeing and marginalises their voice (Oruh and Mordi, 2016). In furthering this argument, the texts below from interview extracts will consider how this is operationalised and legitimised, using lexes of verbs (passive and action) of poor working condition.

Verbs of Poor Working Conditions

Attempt will be made here to analysis verbs in interview extracts to demonstrate how employees see working condition in the Nigerian context. In order to prevent the discussion

about instantiating this situation of analysis from becoming too diffuse, this sub-section will essentially distil the ways in which discourse (texts) – from CDA perspective – can ''nominalise'', and, to a lesser extent, ''passivise'' situations involving employers and employees in Nigeria. Using passive verbs to normalise or legitimise organisational and social practice has been immensely significant in the growth of CDA, particularly in the early experimentation by Fowler (1991) and others. Dijk (2008) has lately identified how language can be used to normalise situations such as mode of employer-employee relationship. Consequently, Dijk (2008) demonstrated how the minutiae of texts can serve to replicate the mechanisms of ideology and it's working in socio-corporate settings (Wodak and Meyer, 2009).

Having said the above, the analysis of ''nominalisation'' precipitated by using varying forms of verbs in interview extracts particularly passive verbs, passive voice over active voice and active voices, is habitually charged with ideological bias and persuasion (Fowler, 1991). For example, a sentence that uses lexes such as ''attack'' (verb), ''employers attacked'' (passive verb) and sentence that uses ''attack'' as an active verb would have to demonstrate who was doing the attacking. For instance, ''employers attack protestors''. To this end, CDA scholars (Fowler, 1991; Fairclough, 2014; Wodak and Meyer, 2009) claim that the choice of words (diction) such as passive over active and *vice versa*, in a given linguistic construction, is not done in a vacuum or randomly; it is used to represent dominant ideological persuasion and belief that guide how things are done in such setting.

The foregoing is appreciably instantiated in the following cluster:

> I have continually maintained that Nigerian employers are the worst in the world, that might be my opinion though. However, these employers constantly *give* us orders any how they like. Is this fair? *They tell* us to work on Sunday when we should be going to church or mosque and Mondays through Saturdays! They just *dictate* the pace for us (PE6).

> My company is quite good at *giving* us orders and not seeking our opinion. When we recently complained about constant heat in the office and poor sanitary condition in our offices, my organisation threatened to *sack us* for voicing out our concerns. These people have constantly *harassed* us and *bullied us* but what can we do? There isn't much choice out there to get another job! When we complain we are *told* to shut up or else get sacked. It's a very troubling situation I tell you Oga! (PE5).

> For peace to reign in the Nigerian employment relations debate, owners of firms should stop *attacking* us for airing our views on matters of grave concern for our welfare, working condition and fairness in the workplace. Lately there was a case of my company *asking* and *mandating* us to come to work even if you're sick and have doctor's report. This is sickening and slavish (BE11).

The above excerpts are awash in active verbs such as ''mandating'', ''asking'', ''told'', ''harassed'', ''bullied'', ''giving'', ''told'', ''tell'', ''dictate'', and ''give''. The contingent upon which a sentence is worded - can be based on two main methods: active or passive. When the verb is active, the subject of the verb is doing the action, as in these examples above. Consequently, as noted by Robert, Bertonasco, and Karns (1991), active verbs aid to foreground the doer of an action and help to ''normalise'' and naturalise such actions within the ambience of a cultural milieu such as Nigeria. When a verb is used in active voice, the subject of the verb (or sentence) performs an action. Such action can be deemed to be legitimate based on cultural realities. In the context pained above, Nigerian patrimonial system permits subjugation of employees as well as undercuts their wellbeing and working condition – which is all triggered and sustained by attempt to maximise value for shareholders (Ikpe, 2000). From an institutional lens, patrimonialism is a governance process that celebrates flow of power from one dimension – one voice. In this situation, power and its accoutrement from one source: the managers, who represent the shareholders. Patrimonialism panders to the allure of private sector rationality (managerialism) and takes oligarchic, exclusive and autocratic slant to leadership (Ikpe, 2000; Otobo, 2016). Discussions and theoretical interpretation is the the focus of the following section.

Discussion

In view of the motives presented and analysed and numerous lexical items in the interview data that empirically test these motives/issues by using CDA approach, this section undertakes discussion and theoretical interpretation of this empirical exploration, which captures the underpinning motives driving managerial capture of employee voice in Nigeria's employment relations. Essentially, the use of CDA enabled the uncovering of how texts/lexes (in data) signify organisational practice such as managerialism (Power, 1991), dis/engagement (Otobo, 2016) and managerial capture (Baker, 2010), which have relationship with wider societal issues such as capitalism, (Fairclough, 1992, 2014; Wodak and Meyer, 2009) and patrimonial Nigerian postcolonial condition (Okpu, 2016). Therefore, identification and analysis of these motives in interview data from two main sectors (banking and petroleum) used here — foreground how Nigerian employment relations system and style are programmed to offer a venner of legitimacy, normalcy and business-as-usual colouration, which implicates Suchman's (1995) ''taken-for-grandtedness'' supposition.

Stemming from the foregoing perspectives and insights is that the various motives identified and analysed in this study robustly underpin organisations' (employers') interest to managerially capture employees' voice for shareholder value maximisation and other strategic gains (Kaufman, 2014; Hirschman, 1970). This engagement processes silence, marginalise and eventually disable employees' input in the whole gamut of employer-employee relations debate. In a bid to realise these strategically oriented motives, Nigerian employers in cahoots with managers strategise and execute predetermined intentions, which find materiality in the disempowerment and silencing of employees' voice in work places. As a consequence, the pattern and style of engagement are rather non-participatory and exclusive, to say the least,

which make it a provenance of managerial capture (Power, 1991) - of employee voice (Hirschman, 1970). This theorising tends to link organisational practices to societal realities in Nigeria, relative to leadership process, political participation and governance structure (Otobo, 2016). The employment of CDA (which is a critical analytical theory) in this study is consistent with Legge's (1995) intimation to redraw the map of HRM and employment relations studies in the wake of ''critical turn'' – CDA turn – in social sciences, humanities and management studies (Watson, 2004). Next section looks at summary and conclusion of this study.

Summary and Conclusion

Through a qualitative method, the present study has analysed data from interviews undertaken to tease out what motives underpins managerial capture of voice in the Nigerian employment relations. In order to operationalise this stated focus, two themes were analysed. These themes include motive of managerialism (nouns) and motive of maximising shareholder value (verbs). As can be gleaned from the above empirical section, this study (which focused on the Nigerian banking and petroleum sectors) observed first, that employee voice dynamic in Nigeria is not participatory, collegial, empowering and engaging (Okpu, 2016; Fajana, 2009), which negates the promise of genuine, collaborative employment relations (Milliken and Tatge, 2016). Second, there are cases in the data, which suggest that the ultimate aim of employer-employee relations is predominantly to maximise shareholder value. For example, almost data sources sing from the comparable hymn sheet – engagement processes and mechanisms are prima facie used for disempowering employees and consigning their rights and privileges into the dustbin of perfunctory engagement that is not result-oriented (Otobo, 2007). Third, there are glaring instances of how employee's opinions/views are clobbered on the heels of managerialist persuasion and ideology. Fourth, workers' welfare is not considered in the gamut of employment relations in Nigeria, which leave employees voice at the mercy of employers and the Nigerian state (Okpu, 2016).

Implications of the Study

The implications of this study are multi-faceted. First, the study has provided some valuable insights into how Nigerian employers engage employees as well as offered a window into the garrisoned walls of labour relations/representation in Nigeria (Otobo, 2007). On the backdrop of data analysed in tandem with the *modus vivendi* of employment relations in Nigeria as well as information derived from extant literature on the phenomenon, it can be gleaned that the motives of engagement are managerially driven, which facilitate a naturalisation and legitimisation of employment relations dynamic in Nigeria. Relying on this canvas, Nigerian employers clobber opposition (and possible salvo) from traditional trade unions, NERs (employees) and wider stakeholders (Otobo, 2016).

Second, evidence from analysis undertaken problematises the ascendency of managerialism over mutual interest and collective bargaining, which helps to advance managerial capture of employee voice (Kaufman, 2014; Hirschman, 1970). This process equally helps in giving more engagement power and resources to employers as well as strengthens their pursuit of power,

control and shareholder's profit maximisation (Freeman and Medorf, 1984; Pollitt, 1990). As an ideological construct and organisational practice, managerialism (managerial capture) ''needs to be understood as an ideology'' with some tangible impacts on the nature of organisational behaviour, framed by wider societal practices and enshrined in mainstream values - archaeology and genealogy of thinking in the world (Foucault, 1977, 1982; Pollitt, 1990, p. xi). This perspective finds correspondence in critical approach undertaken in this study that is operationalised via critical discourse analysis (CDA) and lexical patterning of txt corpuses, to showcase the dynamics of relationship in social actuality such as employment relations (Fairclough, 2014). Thus, lexicalization is implicated in ideology, which encases cultural values and belief system (Dijk, 2008; Palmquist et al., 1997; Wodak and Meyer, 2009) in a definite social space such as Nigeria.

Third, this study provides a vignette of Nigerian patrimonial, elite-salving and undistributed dynamics of power relations and engagement (Ikpe, 2000; Otobo, 2016) including in particular "Oga At the Top" (OATT) scenario, which legitimises superior-subordinate relationship and inhibits accountability, transparency and individual initiative (Oruh and Mordi, 2016). Again, relying on such corrupt and asphyxiating landscape – compounded with ever-growing unemployment, Nigerian employers leverage on this institutional and cultural system to legitimise their operations. (Okpu, 2016; Otobo, 2016). Fourth, the government (therefore) needs to diversity its economy to create more employment and jobs that will empower employees to engage more constructively and collectively with employers of labour. Sadly, realising such feat in a society that is afflicted by rentier economy (Achua, 2008; Idemudia, 2010) is quite challenging, to say the least. The rentier nature of the Nigerian state means that oil (and recently ICT and banking) revenue is fundamental to the country's survival. Accordingly, the profit motive of oil multinationals (MNCs) and others is in a symbiotic relationship with government's interest in rent seeking and accumulation (Frynas, 2009). This state of affairs facilitates exploitation of Nigerian employees and their subsequent voice marginalisation and capture.

Contributions of the Study

Deductively, this study has endeavoured to make some insightful, valuable contributions to employee voice in employment relations, particularly from the developing countries perspective – such as Nigeria, which is relatively under-studied (Budhwar and Debrah, 2004; Otobo, 2016). These contributions are demarked within the borders of theory, research, methodology, practice and extant literature on the phenomenon of employment relations (ER) and voice in Nigeria.

Theoretically, this study makes a conscious attempt to respond to the clarion call by Karen Legge (1995, 2005) to widen the topography of employment relations (and HRM) to be more critical, robust and less prescriptive. Widening this field of study and research as Watson (2004) remarked resonates with seeking alternative voice that can pluralise and diversify ways of apprehending organisational practice and managerial conducts in the workplace. As

contended by Greenwood (2002), critical perspective to employment relations and HRM-related studies have the potential to see them (ER and HRM) "as rhetorical and manipulative,....., a tool of management to control workers … and a way of intervening in an employees' life in order to get them sacrifice more of themselves to the needs of the organisation'' (p. 264). Relying on the above insight, this study appropriates Michael Power's (1991) concept of ''managerial capture'' of "employee voice" by implicating it in the overall motives underpinning dynamics through which employers engage employees in Nigeria. This conceptual/theoretical persuasion helps to chaperon the methodological approach and analytical bent of the study, by extending literature on employee voice through the rubric of managerial capture, a metonymy for exclusion, disengagement, disempowerment and lack of representation. Essentially, this mode of inquiry hallmarks CDA, which is used in this study for analysing data drawn from interview. CDA ruptures the continuum of one-dimensional approach to conceiving, interpreting and analysing reality by enabling polyvocal, democratic slant of organisational discourse (Wodak and Meyer, 2009; Fairclough, 2014), which is also a methodological contribution, in terms of data analysis. Data utilised for this study were gathered via interviews with respondents, which is also an empirical contribution to Nigerian employment relations literature.

In practice, this study has provided vital insights into how to better manage and engage Nigerian workforce for collective bargaining and mutual benefit for employees, the government and employers - particularly as the country is currently undergoing critical economic downturn and employment issues that require urgent attention (Otobo, 2016). It is hoped that the insights presented in this study will rejuvenate a rethinking of employee voice dynamic in Nigerian employment relations, as it moves from unequal power relationship to more equal engagement and collective bargaining that will accelerate its rate of recovery from the bangs and pains of socio-political, economic and labour quagmire. Next section looks at suggestions for further research.

Suggestions for Further Research

While this study has provided a number of potentials, it also has indicated some weaknesses. For instance, CDA has emerged as veritable analytical tool for interrogating organisational reality (Woodak, 2000; Fairclough, 2014), some commentators have criticised its tendency to be ideological, *self-marketing*' (Chilton, 2005. P. 21) and may read and analyse text from one-sided position (Breeze, 2011). However, attempt has been made to reduce this limitation via relying on the heuristic of voice trend in Nigeria's history of employment relations, to potentially locate problematic areas in data analysis and interpretation of findings. Furthermore, it may prove worthwhile to compare (triangulate) data used in this study with documentary and survey sources, which can help provide more nuanced understanding of this phenomenon.

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