

## **POWER-BASED NEGOTIATION STRATEGY AND INDUSTRIAL ACTIONS IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH WEST NIGERIA**

**BY**

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### **Abstract**

*Disputes in Nigeria's federal universities frequently disrupt academic schedules, often leading to prolonged strikes and adverse impacts on academic progress. This study investigated the relationships between coercive and legitimate power negotiation strategies on industrial action in federal universities in Southwest Nigeria. The study population comprised 390, and Slovin's formula at 5% margin of error was adopted to determine a sample size of 198 respondents. A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was adopted, with purposive and simple random sampling techniques used to select participants. Data were collected using the Dispute Resolution Outcomes Questionnaire (DROQ) and the Power Base Negotiation Strategy Questionnaire (PBSQ), which were pre-tested through a pilot study to ensure reliability. Analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and inferential methods, including Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and multiple regressions at a 0.05 significance level. The findings showed that legitimate power strategy had a weak, negative but significant relationship with industrial action ( $r = -0.166, p = 0.019 < 0.05$ ), while coercive power strategy also demonstrated a weak, negative, and significant relationship with industrial action ( $r = -0.410, p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). These results suggest that power-based negotiation*

*strategies, though relevant, may worsen disputes when excessively applied, creating mistrust and resistance among academic staff. The study recommends that management of the selected federal universities should minimize over-reliance on coercive and legitimate power tactics, and instead prioritize integrative and collaborative negotiation approaches that emphasize transparency, dialogue, and participatory decision-making. By fostering trust and inclusiveness in negotiations, federal universities can reduce the recurrence of industrial actions and build more sustainable labour–management relations.*

Word count: 260

Keywords: Negotiation, Coercive Power, Legitimate power, Dispute Resolution, Industrial action

## **Introduction**

Institutional managers, according to Akanbi et al. (2019), must possess negotiation skills and adopt appropriate strategies that foster workers' commitment to organizational goals. Effective negotiation is particularly crucial in Nigeria's federal universities, which are expected to drive knowledge-based economic growth, reduce poverty, and produce a skilled workforce capable of adapting global knowledge for local needs. Unfortunately, frequent industrial disputes, often culminating in prolonged strikes led by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), have disrupted these expectations. Such actions have stalled academic calendars, delayed graduations, and undermined the quality and international reputation of Nigerian universities.

The underlying causes of these disputes are multifaceted. Poor governance, inadequate funding, weak leadership, and limited academic freedom continue to strain relations between university management and staff (Adebayo, 2017; Issa et al., 2020). Inadequate funding has resulted in poor remuneration, dilapidated infrastructure, and insufficient resources for teaching and research. Leadership challenges, nepotism, corruption, and lack of transparency have further eroded trust. As a result, industrial disputes have contributed to brain drain, with academics migrating abroad, while domestic and international confidence in Nigerian universities declines (Ajibade, 2017; Olusegun et al., 2020).

Negotiation is a vital mechanism for resolving these disputes, yet the strategies employed often reflect an imbalance of power. Management typically relies on legitimate authority and coercive measures to enforce compliance, while

staff unions resist these tactics, escalating conflicts rather than resolving them. Against this background, this study examines the extent to which power-based negotiation strategies—particularly legitimate and coercive approaches—influence industrial action in federal universities in Southwest Nigeria

### **Statement of the Problem**

The resolution of industrial disputes in Nigerian public universities remains a major challenge, particularly because negotiation strategies are often shaped by power dynamics rather than genuine collaboration. In theory, dispute resolution should involve identifying the causes of conflict, developing appropriate strategies, and implementing solutions that prevent or minimize disruption (Akanbi et al., 2019). In practice, however, negotiation in the Nigerian university system tends to reflect positional bargaining, where management seeks agreements that reinforce its dominance, while unions resist such imbalances. This power-based approach often escalates conflicts, prolongs disputes, and delays resolutions, even when rational compromise would benefit both parties (Wong et al., 2019).

The labour–management relationship in universities is characterized by recurring cycles of cooperation, breakdown, and reconciliation (Ogbole, 2019). Management, driven by the desire to minimize costs, frequently resists wage increases and improved welfare that are not tied to productivity, while unions view such resistance as detrimental to their members’ rights. Consequently, disputes over remuneration, resource allocation, and working conditions are persistent. Although collective bargaining theoretically assumes equality between parties, in reality, the imbalance of power favour management, as they hold prerogatives over hiring, firing, promotions, and work processes (Robbins & Judge, 2013). The exclusion of staff voices in these decisions creates mistrust, dissatisfaction, and frequent recourse to industrial action.

Therefore, the problem confronting Nigerian federal universities is that the reliance on coercive and legitimate power negotiation strategies often intensifies disputes instead of resolving them. Adebayo,(2021). This study is necessary to examine how these strategies influence industrial action and to highlight more effective approaches that can promote trust, fairness, and sustainable labour–management relations.

## **Research Questions**

To investigate this study, the following questions were answered:

To what extent does legitimate power negotiation strategy relates to Industrial actions in Federal Universities in South West Nigeria?

To what extent does coercive power negotiation strategy relates to industrial actions in Federal Universities in South West, Nigeria?

## **Research Objectives**

The main objectives is to examine the relationship between power negotiation strategy and dispute resolution outcome.

The specific objectives are to:

Determine the relationship between legitimate power negotiation strategy and Industrial actions in Federal Universities in South West Nigeria.

Evaluate the relationship between coercive power negotiation strategy and industrial action in Federal Universities in South West Nigeria.

## **Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses have been formulated in null form for the study:

H01: Legitimate Power negotiation strategy has no significant relationship with Industrial actions in Federal Universities in Southwest Nigeria

H02: Coercive power negotiation strategy has no significant relationship with industrial action in Federal Universities in South West, Nigeria..

## **2.0 Conceptual Review**

### **2.1 Negotiation Strategy**

Collective bargaining is a formal process through which a union and an employer negotiate the terms of an agreement, typically focusing on issues such as wages, benefits, and working conditions (Asamu et al., 2021). According to Agashe (2021), it serves as a mechanism for settling perceived incompatibilities between parties. For collective bargaining to be effective, the process must directly address the underlying conflict, be mutually agreed upon, and be free from imposition or deception. Agashe (2021) describes this as a form of “peacemaking.”

Negotiation, as defined by McGovern and Rubenstein (2020), is the integration of conflicting positions into a joint decision. The negotiation process is often conceptualized as an offer–counteroffer model in which parties alternate proposals until an agreement or impasse is reached (Schiff, 2020). In industrial contexts,

negotiations typically involve trade unions pressing for improved pay and working conditions against cautious or resistant management. Although more cooperative approaches are increasingly adopted, confrontational methods remain common in many organizations Eyongndi,(2015 ). Negotiations often display competitive dynamics between trade unions and management, with both sides represented by teams led by chief negotiators and supported by experts who observe verbal and non-verbal cues,Igbinola et al., (2020).

The collective representation of a large workforce empowers unions by strengthening their mandate and increasing the consequences of failed negotiations, which may lead to strikes or strict adherence to work rules (Kjellberg, 2019). This bargaining process seeks to enhance employee welfare and rights through collective strength (Kay & Skarlicki, 2020). Negotiated issues may range from day-to-day workplace concerns affecting small groups of employees to broader employment terms covering the entire workforce, such as wage increases, improved conditions, and other agreed-upon matters.

### **2.1.1 Power Based Negotiation Strategy**

The concept of "power-based negotiation" refers to a negotiation strategy in which one party leverages its power and influence to secure favorable outcomes or concessions from the other party. This approach is characterized by a strong reliance on the unequal distribution of power, often resulting from factors such as economic strength, political dominance, or technological superiority.

Bargaining power in Negotiation is the capacity of one party to dominate the other party due to its influence, power, or status or through a combination of different persuasion tactics.(Ogbole,2019). This, according to Ogbole, is the relative capacity of each of the parties to a negotiation to compel or secure agreement on its own terms or the ability to impose a loss on the other party. The powerful party is, most often than not, the dominant party. It should be borne in mind that unemployment situation in the country, the general economic situation, the unique skills and qualification of Labour among other factors will determine the relative power of the principal actors. According to power –based theory, negotiation is a concept that refers to the process of bargaining and decision-making in which parties with different levels of power compete for resources or influence. It is a complex process that involves the use of various tactics and strategies to achieve the desired outcomes, such as compromise, coercion, or persuasion. Sherrod, (2023).

Fisher and Ury (1981) introduced the notion of Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA) concept as a tool for negotiators to cope with power imbalances. They claim that, if negotiators take account of their options outside a negotiation, they are better protected against agreements that should be rejected. It also helps them to reach agreements that better satisfy their interests. In order to assess whether an offer should be rejected, a party in a dispute has to establish what can be accomplished in alternative procedures to the one currently being conducted. Once the alternatives are known, these can be compared to what one expects to win by accepting an offer in the current procedure. Han *et.al.*,2013 .The Israeli –Palestinian ceasefire negotiation is a case in point. Whereas the Palestinians are war weary and ready for any ceasefire to happen, the Israelis are still arrogantly sticking to positions like Hamas must be fully disarmed , there must be full return of not only the surviving hostages, the dead bodies of deceased hostages must be fully returned. A so-called yellow line was drawn and no Palestinian must cross over it even if it is their house.

### **2.1.2 Legitimate Power Negotiation Strategy.**

This is the authority or position granted by an organisation or society that gives one the right to make decisions and enforce rules. ( Riasi &Asadzadeh 2016, Hoffman *et al.* 2017, Hoelzl *et.al.* 2022)The power is due to the formal position or role within a hierarchy and it comes from the belief that the individual has the right to make decisions and that subordinates have an obligation to comply. In the universities, the organogram showed clearly the formal authority with the Vice Chancellors at the apex. He/ She is assisted by the deputy vice chancellors. The faculties are headed by the Deans assisted by the Heads of departments. Therefore, legitimate authority is a source of influence tied to a specific job, and a person loses it when he/she leaves that role. Organisation's hierarchy or a social structure, Subordinates comply because they accept the individual's right to give commands based on their position. Majekodunmi *et.al.*, (2024)

Traditionally, the power to determine what is done, when, where and by who within the employment contract resides with the employer (represented by management) as the owner of the business. Gelfand & Dyer, (2019) He, who has the power to hire, has the power to fire. Thus, the employer can dismiss a worker for any reason or no reason at all. He dictates the tune while the employee dances to it (Kleshinski *et.al.*2022). Thus the workers most often than not if recognized at all in managerial capacity only play an advisory role. This relationship style

relegates the workers to the position of mere ‘servants’ who are not allowed to make input into the decisions or management process of the organization where they work. (Wong, & Howard, 2017). According to (Huo et.al. 2022), negotiation is a concept that refers to the process of bargaining and decision-making in which parties with different levels of power compete for resources or influence. It is a complex process that involves the use of various tactics and strategies to achieve the desired outcomes, such as compromise, coercion, or persuasion Gomez *et.al*, (2019)

### **2.1.3 Coercive Power Negotiation Strategy.**

Coercive power is the ability to influence others by using threats or punishment to force the other party to comply with expectation. (Riasi & Asadzadeh, 2016, Hoffman *et al.* 2017, Hoelzl *et.al.* 2022) This can manifest as physical force, or more commonly, as threats of demotion, termination, pay cuts, or other negative consequences for failing to comply with demands. The no-work –no- pay policy of the Federal Government is a case in point., While it can be effective in the short term, it often leads to long-term issues like low job satisfaction, increased turnover, and stifled creativity, as people are motivated by fear rather than genuine agreement. However, the assumption that success in negotiations is simply a matter of "power" has often proven costly as it will lead to unsustainable, one sided, non-mutually satisfactory, non-enduring agreement. A negotiator needs a clearer understanding of the dangers and opportunities, or the lack thereof, that power presents at the negotiating table.

### **2.1.4 Dispute Resolution**

Dispute resolution is the process of identifying, addressing, and resolving disagreements or conflicts among two or more people or groups. Akinwumi, Okeke, & Adesina, (2019), Akindele, & Adejumo, (2015). This paper examines the dispute between Labour, (represented by (ASUU) and Management (represented by Deans of faculties, Deputy vice Chancellors, Bursars, Registrars, Librarians, Government nominees on the Governing councils of the universities). Dispute resolution can be thought of as the methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of disagreements.

Jeong (2019), Osamoh (2022), Okojie, 2015, are all of the opinion that dispute can be handled in a non-adversarial manner that is devoid of threats, coercion, taking into consideration the interests of all the parties involved. This, in

their opinion, will lead to an enduring, mutually satisfactory negotiated agreement. They asserted that once there is an understanding regarding mutually agreeable goals, the negotiating parties can then concentrate on the means to achieve those goals. Mutually acceptable goals will arise from a collaborative search for strategies to bring the dispute to an end. Jeong, 2019, however distinguishes between resolution strategies and settlement process. He opined that in a settlement process, compromises can be achieved without satisfactorily removing deeply contentious issues or without meticulously examining the real sources of grievances. In these instances, he opined, dispute can reoccur in future over the same issue. Jeong warned against the imposition of settlement terms by coercion as this can only result in temporary solution and the agreement will surely be repudiated in future.

Agarshe, (2021) similarly made a contribution to two competing paradigm namely 'dispute management and resolution.' Agarshe submitted that even though the concepts are mutually exclusive, both concepts are Siamese twins that go hand in hand and one cannot be adopted without making use of the other. The resolution is however said to be more broad based and much more idealistic because it centers on believe that the dispute issue can be eliminated and there is a possibility of reaching a mutually satisfactory agreement over the fundamental issue that divides the parties. The resolutionists, therefore, tackle the source of the dispute. They deal with the issues rather than the actors on believe that mutually satisfactory agreement is possible. Therefore, the resolution approach has a greater chance of succeeding and sustaining itself. According to Agarshe, (2021) the dispute management is a limited approach. It believes in bringing the dispute/conflict to an end by putting a wedge between the conflicting parties. The believe of those adopting dispute management strategy is that the lack of interaction will automatically bring the dispute to an end. The peace, however, is not always long lasting as the same issue always brings about dispute at the slightest opportunity. To forestall this from happening, dispute must be handled constructively. Mutually acceptable solutions should be pursued by ensuring clarification of misconception and misperception, social relationship should be strengthened, communication must be improved, coercive tactics should be abandoned, and doors of both parties, (what has been metaphorically referred to as the great handshake across the divide), should be opened for relationship transformation and above both parties' interest and goals must be taken into consideration before arriving at an agreement.(Sondern, & Hertel 2023, Wong and Howard, 2017)

### **2.1.5 Industrial Action.**

Industrial action refers to measures taken by workers or employers, often involving the stoppage of work, as a protest against grievances or unmet demands, usually with the aim of compelling the other party to reverse unfavorable conditions or implement specific requests Anushiem, (2014), Morenikeji,(2023). The most common form is the strike, which involves the cessation of work by employees acting collectively under a shared understanding, as frequently practiced by unions such as ASUU (Anushiem, 2014). Another form is the lock-out, where an employer closes the workplace to force employees to accept the status quo or return to work (Anushiem, 2014). Picketing represents another type of industrial action, where constraints are placed on workers' movement, thereby preventing them from entering their offices or places of work (Anushiem, 2014). Work-to-rule is also common, where employees strictly adhere to contractual obligations without rendering extra services such as overtime, make-up lectures, or additional efforts to cover lost academic time (Anushiem, 2014). A further form is the go -slow, in which workers deliberately reduce their speed and efficiency to show discontent (Anushiem, 2014). Collectively, these forms of industrial action highlight the range of strategies available in labour–management relations and are often used to express dissatisfaction, press for improved conditions, or resist unfavorable policies. Morenikeji, (2023)

## **3.0 Theoretical Review**

There are two theories relevant to this study namely resource based theory and integrative theory.

### **3.1 Resource based theory (RBT)**

Resource-Based Theory (RBT) suggests that organisations achieve a competitive advantage by acquiring and utilizing valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources. (VRIN). RBT is a power-based theory of negotiation. In RBT, Negotiation is defined as dispute scenarios between opponents who maintain incompatible goals. One of the main theoretical contributions derived from the approach is the theory that” power is the central determining factor in negotiations”. Consequently, the relative power of each party affects their ability to secure their individual goals through negotiations. RBT’s definition of power is the possession of ‘strength’ or ‘resources.

The theory suggests that leveraging and aligning resources effectively can lead to improved negotiation outcome. (Babawale, 2018). Negotiation and dispute resolution often focus on interpersonal dynamics and communication, the underlying resources and capabilities possessed by each party can significantly influence the outcomes (Mbagwu, 2019). According to RBT, negotiators can achieve a competitive advantage by identifying resources that are valuable, rare, and inimitable, and by leveraging these resources to secure their interests. For example, in a Labour negotiation, the union may have a rare and valuable resource in the form of highly skilled workers, which they can leverage on to secure higher wages and better benefits.

Finally, RBT suggests that negotiators should be aware of the resource base of their counterparts and seek to exploit any weaknesses or gaps in their resources. By doing so, negotiators can gain an advantage and achieve their goals more easily. For example, as a result of the incessant strike action by ASUU, to weaken its Best Alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA), the Government registered a rival organisation to serve as strike breakers. Salawu (2020) also argue that negotiation and dispute resolution processes can be influenced by resource dependence, where parties may compete or cooperate based on the resources they control or need. Understanding the resource dependencies between parties can inform negotiation strategies, power dynamics, and potential areas for collaboration.

In negotiation and dispute resolution, parties can explore ways to identify and utilize resource complementarity to find mutually beneficial solutions. This can involve pooling resources, sharing expertise, or collaborating on joint projects (Adewale & Oni, 2020). Finally, RBT suggests that negotiators should be aware of the resource base of their counterparts and seek to exploit any weaknesses or gaps in their resources. The relevance of RBT to negotiation and dispute resolution outcomes can be understood in terms of how it guides negotiators to identify, acquire, and use resources to achieve their goals (Akinwumi & Adetoro, 2018; Mbagwu, 2019; Salawu, 2020).

Notwithstanding the criticism, Resource-Based Theory offers valuable insights for negotiators and dispute resolution practitioners in terms of how they can identify, acquire, and use resources to achieve their goals and gain a competitive advantage.

### **3.2 Integrative Theory**

Integrative theory frames negotiations as interactions with the potential for win-win outcomes. This theory suggests methods to create value by expanding the available resources so that there is more to distribute between the parties involved in the negotiation process. Integrative theory relies on objective criteria, strives to establish conditions of mutual gain, and underscores the importance of information exchange and group problem-solving (Lewicki et al., 2015). As integrative approaches focus on problem-solving, cooperation, joint decision-making, and mutual benefits, participants are encouraged to collaborate to develop solutions that benefit all parties. This involves uncovering interests, generating options, and seeking common ground between the negotiating parties. The success of integrative negotiation hinges on the sincerity and willingness of the parties to trust each other.

The integrative negotiation strategy is hereby recommended as a more appropriate theory for negotiating parties because of its prescription of value creation, joint decision making, information exchange among the parties, problem solving among others.

### **3.3 Empirical Review**

Riasi & Asadzadeh (2016) investigates the relationship between two sources of organizational power (i.e., coercive and legitimate power) and five conflict management styles (i.e., avoiding, accommodating, competing, collaborating, and compromising style). Results of this study revealed that principals' coercive power has a positive relationship with avoiding and competing conflict management styles. Since these two conflict management styles both require low levels of cooperation, therefore it is fair to claim that higher degrees of coercive power facilitate the use of conflict management styles that require low levels of cooperation. It was also found that principals' legitimate power is positively related to accommodating and collaborating conflict management styles. Since both of these styles are associated with high levels of cooperation, therefore it is fair to claim that higher degrees of legitimate power will facilitate the use of conflict management styles requiring high levels of cooperation.

Hoffman et.al. (2017) study the use of coercive and legitimate power to confirm whether it will ensure cooperation and prohibit free-riding. Coercive power, according to the researchers comprise of severe punishment and strict monitoring, legitimate power, on the other hand, covers expert, and informative procedures. The perception of these powers wielded by authorities stimulates specific

cognitions: trust, relational climates, and motives. The researchers conducted four experiments to show the single and combined impact of coercive and legitimate power on these processes and on intended cooperation of  $n_1 = 120$ ,  $n_2 = 130$ ,  $n_3 = 368$ , and  $n_4 = 102$  student participants investigated within two exemplary contexts (tax contributions, insurance claims). Findings reveal that coercive power increases an antagonistic climate and enforced compliance, whereas legitimate power increases reason-based trust, a service climate, and voluntary cooperation. Unexpectedly, legitimate power additionally have a negative effect on an antagonistic climate and a positive effect on enforced compliance; these findings lead to a modification of theoretical assumptions. However, they submitted that solely reason-based trust, but not climate perceptions and motives, mediates the relationship between power and intended cooperation. Implications for theory and practice were discussed thoroughly in their research report.

Longe (2019) investigated the impact of workplace labour dispute management on organizational performance in a Nigerian manufacturing firm, using data from 250 employees selected through stratified random sampling. The questionnaires were validated through structured instruments, analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Spearman correlation analysis indicated a positive correlation between organizational performance and labour dispute management strategies like collective bargaining, compromise, and accommodation. On the other hand, non-integrative strategies such as competition, domination, and avoidance negatively impact organizational performance. Collective bargaining concentrates the strongest positive correlation of performance. Conflicts usually arise because of economic and goal incompatibility, leading the labour dispute to be union-management disputes. The study concluded that, while labour dispute is inevitable, it either enhances or hinders performance, depending on the management approach fitted to it.

Hoelzl *et.al* (2022) postulated that a Sharing economy organizations depends on customer cooperation. According to the researchers, existing theory, namely, the extended slippery slope framework, *coercive* and *legitimate* power are two means of achieving cooperation and trust. Based on this theory, the study examined the role of coercive and legitimate power in the sharing economy in four studies. Study 1 examined the extent of existing sharing organizations' coercive and legitimate power (B2C, P2P, and communities) by employing website analysis. In Study 2, consumers discussed which forms of power (coercive or legitimate) were perceived by sharing organizations in focus groups. Study 3 investigated the impact of

coercive and legitimate power on consumer cooperation in a laboratory experiment using a give-or-take-some (GOTS) game. Study 4 examined the impact of coercive and legitimate power on cooperation using an experimental online questionnaire. The study found out that providers of sharing economy services highlight coercive measures on their websites, whereas consumers in the focus group discussions highlight the importance of legitimate power, as is evident in the experiments. Thus, while sharing organizations could increase their use of legitimate power, they should apply coercive power carefully.

#### **4.0 Methodology**

The study adopted the descriptive cross sectional research design. The survey design was used based on the recommendation of Wyse (2012), that survey is relatively easy to administer and can be developed in less time. The population of this study is three hundred and nine (390) consisting of ASUU executives both present and past (known as ex-officio members) and management of the six selected Federal universities (represented by the Deputy Vice Chancellors, Bursars, Registrars, Librarians and their deputies) in Southwest Nigeria namely University of Lagos (UNILAG), Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, (FUNAAB), Federal University, Oye-Ekiti (FUOYE), Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA), University of Ibadan (UI), and Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife (OAU) in Southwest Nigeria. The selected universities are those that are owned by Federal Government in southwest, Nigeria. The assumption behind these selections is that some degree of uniformity exists in their negotiation strategies. The study used Slovin's (1963) formula to determine the sample size with a 5% significance level. A total sample of 198 participants was selected, including 141 ASUU executives, both present and past (known as Ex-officios) and 57 members of management (represented by the DVCs, Bursars, Registrars, Librarians and Deans and their deputies) from the six selected Federal universities in South West, Nigeria. The sampling technique deployed for the study is the purposive sampling and random sampling. This is because all samples consist of labour leaders and Ex-Officio members of management of the selected Federal universities in South West Nigeria.

The data collection instruments for the study comprised of Disputes Resolution outcomes Questionnaire (DROQ) by Magdalene (2016) and Power Base Negotiation Strategy Questionnaire (PBSQ.). A pilot survey was conducted to pre-test the questionnaire, allowing for correction of errors and improvement of

clarity, comprehension, and relevance. Ten respondents participated, helping assess the instrument's reliability. Research hypotheses were tested using inferential statistics of Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistic and multiple regression analysis at 0.05 significant levels.

## Results and Discussions

### Research Hypothesis One (H01)

Null: There is no significant relationship between legitimate power negotiation strategy and industrial action in federal universities in Southwest Nigeria.

Test: Pearson’s product–moment correlation.

Result: A weak, negative, and statistically significant association was found ( $r = -0.166$ ,  $p = 0.019$ ,  $N = 198$ ). Therefore, reject H01.

**Table 4.1 Relationship between legitimate power strategy and industrial action (Southwest Nigeria)**

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r	p	Remark
Legitimate power	198	4.303	1.2494	- 0.166	0.019	Significant
Industrial action	198	4.0657	1.310	—	—	—

Source; Field work, 2025

### Research Hypothesis Two (H02)

Null: There is no significant relationship between coercive power negotiation strategy and industrial action in federal universities in Southwest Nigeria.

Test: Pearson’s product–moment correlation.

Result: A weak, negative, and statistically significant association was found ( $r = -0.410$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $N = 198$ ). Therefore, reject H02.

**Table 4.2 Relationship between coercive power strategy and industrial action (Southwest Nigeria)**

Variable	N	Mean	SD	R	p	Remark
Coercive power	198	2.636	0.427	- 0.410	< 0.001	Significant
Industrial action	198	4.0657	0.758	—	—	—

Source; Field work, 2025

## **Discussion of Findings**

The findings from this study indicate that legitimate power negotiation strategy has a weak, negative, and statistically significant relationship with industrial action in federal universities in Southwest Nigeria ( $r = -0.166$ ,  $p = 0.019 < 0.05$ ). This outcome suggests that reliance on legitimate authority by university management—such as enforcing formal rules, exercising prerogatives over hiring and promotions, and determining work processes—may intensify disputes rather than resolve them. This aligns with Robbins and Judge (2013), Majekodunmi *et al*, 2024 who both argued that managerial insistence on prerogatives without adequate staff involvement leads to recurring disputes. Similarly, Wong *et al*. (2019), Morenikeji (2023) observed that positional bargaining based on authority often results in escalated disputes, as powerful parties undervalue concessions and resist mutually beneficial solutions. The implication is that while legitimate power provides a formal basis for decision-making, its application in isolation may undermine industrial harmony within universities.

The study also found a weak, negative but significant relationship between coercive power negotiation strategy and industrial action ( $r = -0.410$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This result shows that the use of coercion—through threats, intimidation, or punitive actions—triggers resistance from unions and increases the likelihood of strikes. This corroborates the views of Ogbole (2019), who emphasized that labour–management relationships are characterized by cycles of cooperation and conflict, with coercion amplifying mistrust and antagonism. Similarly, Akinwumi, Okeke, and Adesina (2019) noted that negotiation strategies that disregard collaboration often fail to address the root causes of disputes, leading to prolonged industrial action.

## **5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

This study examined the influence of power negotiation strategies—specifically legitimate and coercive approaches—on the resolution of industrial action in federal universities in Southwest Nigeria. The findings revealed that while power-based strategies are often used to reinforce managerial authority, they tend to create tension, weaken trust, and provoke resistance among academic staff. The weak but significant negative relationships observed suggest that reliance on

legitimate authority or coercive tactics is counterproductive, as these strategies may escalate disputes rather than provide lasting solutions. The implication is that negotiation processes grounded solely in power dynamics undermine constructive engagement and hinder effective dispute resolution. Therefore, sustainable industrial relations in universities require a shift towards more inclusive and collaborative approaches that emphasize transparency, mutual respect, and dialogue. Such strategies will not only reduce the frequency of strikes but also strengthen trust between management and staff, thereby improving the stability and performance of the academic system.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

University management must ensure that power negotiation strategy is applied with caution to avoid alienation and mistrust. The use of threats, intimidation, coercion, and all negative tactics must be avoided. There must be genuine attempt at resolution of industrial strikes. This will foster greater cooperation, ensure that academic staff concerns are heard, and reduce the perception of top-down decision-making, thereby enhancing the legitimacy of the negotiation process. Collaborative efforts must be taken to ensure effective resolution of industrial action. In power negotiation, the strategic choice to use contentious behavior - pressure tactics, excessive demands, commitments to unalterable positions, persuasive arguments, and threats is an inefficient and unwise negotiations strategy. Theorists and researchers have concluded that contending, or positional bargaining, often leads to unsatisfactory conclusions, especially when both parties contend throughout the negotiations (Pruitt and Carnevale, 1982). This may escalate the dispute. Either of the parties must use collaborative approaches to prevent escalation.

The negotiating parties must try to address the interests of either party. Their strategy must be the problem solving or interest-based bargaining advocated by modern theorists. Instead of being defensive or persuasive. There must be no attempt to coerce, threaten, intimidate or humiliate the other party.

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