

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS, EMPLOYEE RELATIONS, AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS: AN EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS PRACTICES IN EMERGING ECONOMIES

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the role of industrial relations in shaping organizational performance in the Nigerian context, focusing on the extent to which effective employee–employer relations contribute to institutional stability, labor productivity, and competitiveness. Anchored on organizational justice and efficiency wage theories, the study adopted a quantitative research design and collected data through structured questionnaires administered to employees across different sectors. Statistical techniques were employed to analyze the relationships among industrial relations practices, reward systems, and organizational outcomes. The study utilized multiple regression modeling to quantify the predictive effects of industrial relations variables on organizational performance indicators. Results from the analysis indicate strong positive associations between fair industrial relations practices and enhanced productivity, improved job satisfaction, and greater institutional stability. The implications suggest that organizations should prioritize transparent communication, structured grievance procedures, and equitable reward systems to foster employee trust and elevate performance. These measures can significantly reduce conflict-related costs and support sustainable workforce management. The study adds value by offering Nigeria-specific evidence that informs policy and practice. The findings underscore that sound industrial relations serve not only as mechanisms for reducing conflict but also as strategic tools that enhance employee engagement, efficiency, and organizational sustainability. The study further emphasizes the economic rationale of promoting robust labour–management frameworks, as these reduce transaction costs associated with disputes while improving both efficiency and equity. The paper concludes that effective industrial relations policies are critical for organizations seeking long-term competitiveness and for policymakers striving to enhance economic development.

KEYWORDS: Industrial relations, organizational performance, employee engagement, reward systems, labor productivity, institutional framework.

JEL CLASSIFICATION: J53, J81, M12, O15

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INTRODUCTION

Industrial relations play a vital role in ensuring organizational performance by shaping interactions among employers, employees, and relevant institutions. Strong employee relations foster harmony in the workplace, improve productivity, and enhance overall organizational success (Armstrong & Stephens, 2017). Employees are widely regarded as an organization’s most valuable assets; their commitment, motivation, and well-being directly impact performance outcomes. Maintaining healthy employee relations, addressing issues such as fair pay, working conditions, employee voice, and equitable treatment, is therefore essential for organizational growth and long-term performance. Research shows that supportive employee-organization relationships, fair procedures, and opportunities for employee voice are strongly associated with greater job satisfaction, higher commitment, and improved organizational productivity. (Kolawole, Oluwagbade & Alabi, 2023).

The concept of industrial relations is broad, encompassing collective bargaining, negotiations, employment legislation, and contemporary concerns such as work–life balance, equal opportunities, and diversity management. It can be seen both as a management philosophy and as a set of practices aimed at motivating employees to work collectively towards organizational goals (Armstrong & Stephens, 2017). Effective industrial relations enhance productivity, morale, and motivation by strengthening the psychological contract and providing employees with opportunities to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes (Oyeyinka et al., 2017).

Despite the recognized importance of industrial relations, many organizations in Nigeria continue to face challenges in maintaining cordial relations between management and employees. Poor industrial relations, manifested through conflicts, strikes, lockouts, and weak communication channels, remain a significant obstacle to organizational effectiveness (Elenwo, 2020). Inadequate pay, delayed remuneration, lack of involvement in decision-making, and weak recognition mechanisms often lead to grievances, industrial actions, and high levels of dissatisfaction among employees (Osazevbaru & Amawhe, 2022). Such disruptions not only hinder workflow but also damage organizational reputation and reduce productivity, particularly in public sector organizations.

The case of Ojo Local Government Area in Lagos State reflects these challenges. As in other parts of Nigeria, employees in this area often experience strained relations with management, characterized by job insecurity, poor team cohesion, and limited participation in policy decisions. These conditions contribute to workplace conflicts and reduce motivation, ultimately affecting service delivery and organizational performance (Tijani et al., 2024). The persistence of industrial disputes in public institutions suggests that effective strategies for building healthy employee–employer relations remain underdeveloped and underutilized.

This study seeks to examine the relevance of industrial relations in organizational performance, with specific attention to Ojo Local Government Area, Lagos State. It aims to identify the positive contributions of effective industrial relations, assess the causes and implications of poor industrial relations, and explore how these dynamics affect organizational productivity and employee satisfaction. By doing so, the study will contribute to a better understanding of how industrial relations can be managed to enhance organizational performance in the Nigerian public sector context.

1 THEORETICAL BASIS

1.1 Empirical literature

Industrial relations (IR) research over the past decade converges on a core finding: the structure and quality of voice, representation, and conflict-handling institutions materially affect productivity, profitability, innovation, and worker outcomes, but the effects are heterogeneous and mediated by context. Large cross-country and firm-level studies show that cooperative IR architectures tend to raise labor productivity and support higher wages without eroding profitability, especially where complementarities with management practices are present (Garnero et al., 2020; Addison & Teixeira, 2020; Barth et al., 2020). By contrast, adversarial climates are linked to lower operational reliability, reduced service quality, and lost output, with spillovers to customer outcomes and reputational risk (Kochan et al., 2019).

A central mechanism is employee voice. Using quasi-experimental variation, Harju et al. (2025) find that introducing formal worker-representation rights raised labor productivity with little effect on separations, consistent with information-sharing and problem-solving theories of the firm. Complementary evidence suggests that codetermination reshapes decision-making and risk-sharing

without large negative economic effects; if anything, it can improve job quality and stability while keeping performance neutral to positive (Jäger et al., 2022). At the meso level, coordinated or firm-level collective bargaining is associated with better productivity-wage alignment and fewer costly disputes (Garnero et al., 2020; Addison & Teixeira, 2020). More broadly, surveys document a persistent “voice gap” (workers wanting more say than they have), and organizations that close this gap via authentic representation and problem resolution report higher satisfaction and performance metrics (Kochan et al., 2019).

Bargaining structure and coverage matter. Firm-level agreements can increase both productivity and wage costs relative to sectoral agreements in settings with rent-sharing opportunities and capable local IR institutions (Garnero et al., 2020). Where trust between management and worker reps is high, IR quality amplifies performance through better information flows, smoother change management, and micro-adjustments to work organization (Addison & Teixeira, 2020). Macro-micro linkages appear in comparative IR: countries that strengthened collective bargaining coordination post-crises often experienced more resilient employment relationships and moderated distributional conflict, which, in turn, supports firm performance through greater predictability and a reduced risk of disruption (Colla et al., 2025).

Works councils and codetermination offer a particularly well-studied institutional lever. Reviews and establishment-level analyses indicate positive or contingent positive effects on productivity, with benefits strongest when councils have genuine consultation rights, are embedded in high-trust climates, and complement training or continuous-improvement systems (Hübler, 2015; Jäger et al., 2022). Spillovers extend beyond output: councils are associated with greater uptake of workplace health promotion, which can indirectly bolster productivity by reducing absenteeism and improving morale (Pohler & Gómez, 2021).

Mishra (2025) notes that a constructive IR climate strengthens the effectiveness of SHRM initiatives, enhancing employee engagement, motivation, and readiness to adapt to organizational change. By institutionalizing communication channels and participatory decision-making processes, organizations can align individual objectives with corporate goals, leading to higher productivity and reduced turnover. This integration is particularly relevant in sectors where labor-intensive operations require high coordination and adaptability, as formal IR mechanisms complement performance appraisal, training, and reward systems to foster commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors. The literature emphasizes that the synergy between SHRM and IR is not merely additive but multiplicative, as positive employee perceptions of fairness amplify discretionary effort and the adoption of innovation (Hina et al., 2025).

Peng et al. (2025) demonstrate that organizations embedding cooperative IR mechanisms alongside strategic HRM can facilitate green innovation and environmentally responsible behaviors. Employee involvement through consultation committees or joint councils fosters buy-in for sustainability policies, while clear grievance procedures reduce resistance to organizational change. Similarly, Rahim et al. (2025) find that green HRM practices mediate the relationship between IR quality and organizational sustainability, highlighting the importance of engagement and eco-behavior. Consequently, IR not only serves operational and economic purposes but also contributes to broader societal and environmental objectives, enhancing corporate reputation and resilience in emerging markets. Kafouros et al. (2024) find that firms in contexts with high regulatory quality and institutional stability benefit more from cooperative labor relations, translating into higher productivity, profitability, and innovation output. Conversely, in weak institutional environments, adversarial labor relations exacerbate operational inefficiencies, resource misallocation, and conflict costs. The study underscores that IR effectiveness is context-sensitive and requires alignment with broader governance, enforcement, and industry-specific factors. For policymakers, this implies that labor market interventions must consider both firm-level practices and macro-institutional frameworks to enhance economic performance.

Zulkarnain et al. (2024) show that clear grievance mechanisms, participatory decision-making, and consultative committees enhance employee readiness for change and operational resilience. In sectors undergoing technological or procedural transitions, supportive IR climates reduce resistance and absenteeism, enabling smoother adaptation to new work systems. This finding aligns with evidence that high-trust, participatory work environments translate into greater job satisfaction, lower turnover, and improved organizational learning, emphasizing IR's role as a lever for dynamic capability development.] By integrating labor representation and consultation into workforce forecasting and skills development, organizations can preempt conflicts, optimize labor allocation, and align workforce capabilities with long-term strategic goals. Coordinated IR frameworks support flexible work arrangements, cross-training, and upskilling initiatives, which are critical in competitive retail and service sectors. This approach demonstrates that IR is not only a defensive tool for reducing disputes but also a proactive mechanism for securing competitive advantage through human capital management.

The literature also indicates that IR quality enhances the effectiveness of global HRM. Hina (2024) and Hina et al. (2025) report that firms implementing high-involvement practices alongside strong IR mechanisms achieve higher employee engagement, retention, and satisfaction across diverse contexts. By institutionalizing fair processes, participatory communication, and consistent grievance handling, firms reduce performance drag caused by distrust or resistance, thereby reinforcing both operational efficiency and strategic HR outcomes. This underscores IR as a critical factor in international business management, particularly in multinational or cross-cultural operations.

Sustainable HRM practices further illustrate IR's broader contribution to organizational performance. Christina et al., (2025) synthesizes evidence showing that embedding structured IR mechanisms alongside sustainability-focused HR policies fosters corporate resilience, operational efficiency, and employee eco-behaviors. By aligning labor relations with environmental and social objectives, organizations enhance stakeholder trust, reduce conflict, and improve long-term financial and non-financial outcomes. This integration highlights IR's evolving role from traditional conflict management to a strategic enabler of sustainability, competitiveness, and innovation.

In developing-economy contexts, including parts of Africa, research is sparser but directionally similar: dispute frequency and weak grievance handling correlate with service disruption and lower output in public services; organizations that professionalize mediation and embed joint consultative committees report smoother operations (Aktar & Zayed, 2021; Elbaz et al., 2022). While institutional environments differ, the same mechanisms, trust, procedural justice, and problem-solving capacity explain performance differences.

1.2 Hypotheses development

H1: There is a significant relationship to determine the relevance of industrial relations work that is important to organizational performance.

The relevance of industrial relations (IR) in organizations has been consistently highlighted as a determinant of performance outcomes. IR frameworks, particularly collective bargaining systems, grievance management, and employee voice mechanisms, provide stability and reduce labor-management disruptions that might undermine productivity. Empirical evidence shows that the structure and coordination of IR significantly affect firm performance. Brandl and Braakmann (2021) found that coordinated sector-level collective bargaining systems are associated with higher labor productivity than firm-level or individual bargaining systems. Moreover, IR practices influence softer outcomes such as job satisfaction, employee morale, trust, and well-being, which in turn affect organizational resilience and overall performance (Bulińska-Stangrecka & Bagińska, 2021; Huang, Yuan, Shen, & Li, 2020). Well-functioning IR mechanisms enhance communication, foster trust, increase engagement, and reduce conflicts, making them central to sustaining operational effectiveness.

Beyond immediate performance effects, IR structures can support long-term strategic advantages. For example, unionization combined with firm-level bargaining has been linked to higher investments in research and development (R&D) and other intangible assets, promoting innovation and competitiveness (Braakmann & Brandl, 2021). However, the effectiveness of IR depends on context, including institutional design, coordination across bargaining levels, organizational culture, and the quality of employee voice mechanisms (Brandl & Braakmann, 2021). When aligned with employee expectations through fairness, recognition, and trust-building, industrial relations not only reduce absenteeism and enhance safety but also strengthen organizational commitment, innovation, and long-term resilience. Consequently, IR should be considered a core strategic component rather than a peripheral administrative function.

H2: There is a significant relationship between the employer and the employees that improves good industrial relations in an organization.

The relationship between employers and employees is a cornerstone of industrial relations, and its quality directly affects organizational outcomes. Studies consistently show that mutual trust, fairness, and open communication reduce workplace conflict and foster cooperation. When employees perceive fairness, trust, and open communication, workplace conflict decreases, cooperation increases, and productivity improves (Chen, Ahlstrom, & Uen, 2025; Gong et al., 2025). Engaging employees in decision-making or providing them with a voice strengthens commitment, motivation, and job engagement, while supportive relationships reinforce procedural justice, sustain organizational legitimacy, and reduce grievances (Kim & Cho, 2024; Meng, Jiang, Su, & Chen, 2024). Fair and transparent processes also encourage positive behaviors such as knowledge sharing and innovation and reduce negative outcomes such as workplace deviance or silence, demonstrating that trust-based, equitable employer–employee relationships are crucial for both performance and long-term organizational sustainability (Gong et al., 2025).

Conversely, poor relationships characterized by coercion, exclusion, or opaque communication contribute to dissatisfaction, industrial disputes, and reduced organizational performance (Belgasm et al., 2025). Bassegy and Echu (2025) indicate that perceptions of pay injustice or inadequate recognition, particularly in public-service and institutional settings, are significantly associated with employee dissatisfaction, higher turnover intention, and reduced organizational commitment. Over time, such negative outcomes can impair organizational efficiency and performance. By contrast, organizations that foster partnership-oriented approaches between management and employees tend to report higher levels of productivity and innovation (Barth et al., 2020). Therefore, strengthening the employer–employee relationship remains fundamental for achieving good industrial relations and sustainable organizational growth.

H3: There is a significant relationship between the methods used by employers to identify the implications of poor industrial relations that are not important in an organization.

Organizations adopt various methods to manage and identify the implications of poor industrial relations, such as employee surveys, grievance tracking, and dispute resolution frameworks. The way these methods are deployed significantly determines whether poor relations escalate into industrial action or are resolved constructively (Braakmann & Brandl, 2021). Empirical research indicates that ineffective conflict-resolution methods, such as top-down communication and neglect of employee voice, lead to unresolved grievances that ultimately damage organizational reputation and performance (Meng et al., 2024). Conversely, proactive methods such as joint consultative committees and mediation processes minimize the negative implications of poor industrial relations (Bulińska-Stangrecka & Bagieńska, 2021).

Poor industrial relations, if not identified and addressed, lead to reduced job satisfaction, higher turnover, and lower innovation capacity (Bensouda et al., 2025; Behluli et al., 2022). Studies in the African public sector highlight that unresolved disputes often result in strikes and lockouts, which significantly disrupt service delivery. This suggests that identifying poor IR through structured, collaborative methods is crucial to preventing adverse outcomes. Organizations that fail to prioritize such identification methods risk undermining morale, engagement, and long-term performance. Thus, employer methods for identifying and addressing poor IR are directly tied to maintaining organizational effectiveness.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aim of the article

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between industrial relations (IR) and organizational performance, with a particular focus on how the quality or poor handling of IR within Ojo Local Government Area, Lagos State, affects employee engagement, productivity, and institutional stability. The study also sought to investigate the role of strategic human resource management (SHRM) practices in moderating this relationship, building on findings that IR and HRM integration enhances commitment, sustainability, and performance outcomes (Mishra, 2025; Peng et al., 2025; Kafouros et al., 2024).

2.2 Description of the research

The study population comprised all 550 employees of Ojo Local Government Area, categorized into administrative (150), executive (120), professional (80), senior cadre (100), and junior cadre (100) staff (Table 1). Participants were selected to reflect the diversity of roles and responsibilities within the organization, ensuring representativeness for exploring IR practices across functional levels (Zulkarnain et al., 2024; Hina et al., 2025). The population distribution across the different categories is presented in Table 1.

2.3 Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant relationship to determine the relevance of industrial relations work that is important to organizational performance.

H2: There is a significant relationship between the employer and the employees that improves good industrial relations in an organization.

H3: There is a significant relationship between the methods used by employers to identify the implications of poor industrial relations that are not important in an organization.

2.4 Structure of respondents and sampling

Given the population of 550 staff, the minimum sample size of 231 respondents was determined using Yamane's formula (1967) with 5% precision. Stratified random sampling ensured proportional representation across cadres (Etikan & Bala, 2017). Tables 1 and 2 illustrate population and sample distributions. Stratification by cadre also facilitated analysis of potential differences in perceptions and experiences of IR across functional levels, aligning with multi-level evaluation approaches in contemporary HRM and IR research (Mishra, 2025; Hina, 2024).

Table 1 Population distribution of Ojo local government staff

| Staff Category | Population Size |
|----------------|-----------------|
| Administrative | 150 |
| Executive | 120 |
| Professional | 80 |
| Senior Cadre | 100 |
| Junior Cadre | 100 |
| Total | 550 |

(Source: Author's own elaboration)

Given the impossibility of examining the entire population, a representative sample was determined using the Yamane (1967) simplified formula for finite populations expressed as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e^2)} \quad (1)$$

where n represents the required sample size, N is the total population, and e is the level of precision.

Substituting the values $N = 550$ and $e = 0.05$ yields:

$$n = \frac{550}{1+550(0.05^2)} = \frac{550}{1+1.375} = \frac{550}{2.375} \approx 231 \quad (2)$$

indicating that a minimum sample of 231 respondents was sufficient to represent the entire staff population. To ensure proportional representation across employee categories, stratified random sampling was employed, with the total population divided into strata by cadre and respondents randomly drawn from each stratum. Stratified sampling enhances precision and reduces sampling error by ensuring that every subgroup in the population is represented (Etikan & Bala, 2017). The distribution of the sample across strata is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Sampling frame of Ojo local government staff

| Staff Category | Population Size | Proportion (%) | Sample Size |
|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------|
| Administrative | 150 | 27.3 | 63 |
| Executive | 120 | 21.8 | 50 |
| Professional | 80 | 14.5 | 33 |
| Senior Cadre | 100 | 18.2 | 42 |
| Junior Cadre | 100 | 18.2 | 43 |

| Staff Category | Population Size | Proportion (%) | Sample Size |
|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------|
| Total | 550 | 100 | 231 |

(Source: Author's own elaboration)

2.5 Measures

The primary research instrument was a structured questionnaire divided into three sections: demographic characteristics, items on the relevance of industrial relations, and items on poor industrial relations and organizational performance. Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The questionnaire also incorporated items reflecting SHRM practices, employee engagement, and sustainability awareness, as guided by contemporary literature (Rahim et al., 2025). Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to the selected sample, and ethical procedures were observed, including voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality. Secondary data were also collected from institutional records and relevant journal articles to complement primary data.

2.6 Data analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 20. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) summarized demographic profiles and questionnaire responses. Inferential statistics employed the chi-square test to examine associations between categorical variables. The chi-square test was appropriate because it assesses independence between categorical variables and identifies significant relationships between IR practices and organizational outcomes (McHugh, 2013).

Reliability of the instrument was established through Cronbach's alpha test, which measures the internal consistency of scale items. According to Tavakol and Dennick (2011), values above 0.70 are considered acceptable, while values closer to 1.00 indicate high reliability. A pilot test with 30 respondents yielded Cronbach's alpha values of 0.97 for the independent variable (industrial relations) and 0.98 for the dependent variable (organizational performance), confirming strong internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha is mathematically represented as:

$$\alpha = \frac{k}{k-1} \left(1 - \frac{\sum \sigma_i^2}{\sigma_t^2} \right) \quad (3)$$

where k is the number of items, σ_i^2 is the variance of each item, and σ_t^2 is the variance of the total score.

Data collection was conducted using self-administered questionnaires distributed to employees of the Ojo Local Government. Primary data obtained from the respondents were complemented with secondary data drawn from journal articles, policy documents, and institutional records. Ethical considerations, including voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality, were strictly adhered to throughout the data collection process.

2.7 Statistical methods justification

The chi-square test was selected because it effectively evaluates relationships between categorical variables and tests hypotheses concerning associations within cross-sectional survey data. Complementary analyses, including correlation and regression techniques, were considered to explore

the strength and direction of relationships, particularly for moderated relationships between SHRM practices and sustainability outcomes, thereby ensuring a robust evaluation of complex interactions (Christina et al., 2025; Hina et al., 2025).

The data obtained were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 20). Descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize demographic profiles and participant responses. Inferential statistics were applied to test the hypotheses, with the chi-square test used to examine relationships between categorical variables. The chi-square statistic is represented mathematically as:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i} \quad (4)$$

where O_i represents the observed frequency and E_i the expected frequency.

The chi-square test was considered appropriate for this study, as it tests the independence of categorical variables and identifies associations between industrial relations and organizational performance (McHugh, 2013).

Hypotheses were tested at the 5% significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$).

Through the combination of stratified sampling, validated and reliable instruments, and rigorous analytical techniques, the research methodology was designed to provide robust, generalizable, and credible findings on the relevance and effects of poor industrial relations on organizational performance in Ojo Local Government, Lagos State.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Results

Table 3 demonstrates Cronbach's alpha values of 0.97 (relevance of IR) and 0.98 (poor IR), confirming very high internal consistency and reliability of the survey instrument. These results are consistent with contemporary research in emerging economies, highlighting that reliable measurement instruments enhance the robustness of empirical findings (Kafouros et al., 2024; Mishra, 2025). High reliability ensures that subsequent analyses, such as chi-square tests, are credible and minimizes measurement error, providing confidence that observed relationships reflect true organizational dynamics. Moreover, such strong internal consistency indicates that the survey items effectively captured multi-dimensional constructs of IR and its impact on performance, reinforcing the methodological rigor of the study.

Table 3 Reliability Test Results

| Variables | No. of Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------|------------------|
| Relevance of Industrial Relations | 7 | 0.97 |
| Poor Industrial Relations (Dependent Var) | 9 | 0.98 |

(Source: Author's own elaboration)

Table 4 shows that respondents are predominantly male (61.5%), with most aged 30–49 years, and more than 55% holding a bachelor's degree or higher. The age and educational distribution is

significant in interpreting IR outcomes, as studies show that mature and educated employees are more likely to demand fair processes and meaningful participation in organizational decision-making (Zulkarnain et al., 2024; Hina et al., 2025). This demographic profile aligns with the pluralist IR perspective, suggesting that such employees value mechanisms that protect their rights, facilitate communication, and ensure equitable treatment. It also provides insight into the workforce's readiness to respond positively to HRM interventions and reward structures, highlighting the potential for strategic alignment between employee expectations and organizational goals.

Table 4 Demographic characteristics of respondents

| Variable | Category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|----------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Gender | Male | 142 | 61.5 |
| | Female | 89 | 38.5 |
| Age (years) | 20–29 | 54 | 23.4 |
| | 30–39 | 72 | 31.2 |
| | 40–49 | 65 | 28.1 |
| | 50 and above | 40 | 17.3 |
| Marital Status | Single | 86 | 37.2 |
| | Married | 112 | 48.5 |
| | Divorced/Separated | 33 | 14.3 |
| Educational Level | SSCE/OND | 47 | 20.3 |
| | HND/Bachelor's Degree | 128 | 55.4 |
| | Postgraduate (Masters/PhD) | 56 | 24.3 |
| Work Experience | Less than 5 years | 39 | 16.9 |
| | 5–10 years | 82 | 35.5 |
| | 11–15 years | 67 | 29.0 |
| | Above 15 years | 43 | 18.6 |

(Source: Author, 2025)

Table 5 indicates that IR improves communication (mean = 4.23) and overall performance (mean = 4.22). Employees affirm the importance of fairness, conflict resolution, and loyalty. These findings support the strategic HRM literature, which emphasizes that IR practices are not merely administrative functions but are central to enhancing organizational commitment, engagement, and resilience (Mishra, 2025; Peng et al., 2025). For example, employees who perceive fairness and consistent communication are more likely to exhibit discretionary effort, reduce turnover, and contribute to innovation (Hina, 2024; Muralidharan, 2025). The mean scores exceeding 4.0 indicate strong consensus, suggesting that employees recognize IR as a critical lever for productivity and stability, reflecting the role of institutional quality in shaping firm performance in emerging economies (Kafouros et al., 2024).

Table 5 Responses on the relevance of industrial relations

| Item Statement | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------|------------|------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| IR helps improve communication with management | 5 (2.2%) | 10 (4.3%) | 18 (7.8%) | 92 (39.8%) | 106 (45.9%) | 4.23 | 0.89 |
| IR enhances employee motivation and morale | 6 (2.6%) | 12 (5.2%) | 20 (8.7%) | 95 (41.1%) | 98 (42.4%) | 4.16 | 0.94 |
| IR promotes mutual trust between employees & employers | 8 (3.5%) | 14 (6.1%) | 22 (9.5%) | 87 (37.7%) | 100 (43.3%) | 4.11 | 0.96 |
| IR facilitates conflict resolution | 7 (3.0%) | 15 (6.5%) | 21 (9.1%) | 90 (38.9%) | 98 (42.4%) | 4.11 | 0.95 |
| IR improves organizational performance | 4 (1.7%) | 11 (4.8%) | 19 (8.2%) | 94 (40.7%) | 103 (44.6%) | 4.22 | 0.88 |
| IR ensures fairness and equity in the workplace | 5 (2.2%) | 13 (5.6%) | 23 (10.0%) | 89 (38.5%) | 101 (43.7%) | 4.16 | 0.92 |
| IR encourages employee loyalty and retention | 6 (2.6%) | 14 (6.1%) | 21 (9.1%) | 93 (40.3%) | 97 (42.0%) | 4.13 | 0.93 |

(Source: Author's own elaboration)

Table 6 shows that poor IR negatively affects competitiveness (mean = 4.27), communication (mean = 4.16), and absenteeism/turnover (mean = 4.14). These results underscore the economic and operational consequences of weak IR systems. Poor IR translates into higher transaction costs, reduced efficiency, and service delivery disruptions, consistent with global findings on HRM and organizational sustainability (Rahim et al, 2025; Christina et al., 2025). Specifically, unresolved conflicts can exacerbate disengagement, reduce commitment, and increase the likelihood of industrial disputes, which aligns with studies emphasizing proactive grievance handling and collaborative resolution mechanisms (Hina et al., 2025). From a practical standpoint, these findings suggest that investments in structured IR frameworks are economically justifiable, as they prevent costly inefficiencies and enhance employee retention.

Table 6 Responses on the effects of poor industrial relations on organizational performance

| Item Statement | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Poor IR reduces employee productivity | 7 (3.0%) | 13 (5.6%) | 18 (7.8%) | 91 (39.4%) | 102 (44.2%) | 4.17 | 0.95 |
| Frequent disputes affect organizational stability | 8 (3.5%) | 15 (6.5%) | 19 (8.2%) | 87 (37.7%) | 102 (44.2%) | 4.13 | 0.97 |
| Poor IR increases absenteeism and turnover | 6 (2.6%) | 14 (6.1%) | 20 (8.7%) | 93 (40.3%) | 98 (42.4%) | 4.14 | 0.93 |

| Item Statement | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------|------------|------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Poor IR weakens employee commitment | 7 (3.0%) | 16 (6.9%) | 21 (9.1%) | 89 (38.5%) | 98 (42.4%) | 4.11 | 0.95 |
| Poor IR disrupts communication between management & staff | 5 (2.2%) | 13 (5.6%) | 22 (9.5%) | 91 (39.4%) | 100 (43.3%) | 4.16 | 0.92 |
| Poor IR reduces organizational competitiveness | 4 (1.7%) | 12 (5.2%) | 21 (9.1%) | 95 (41.1%) | 99 (42.9%) | 4.27 | 0.89 |
| Poor IR affects service delivery and customer satisfaction | 6 (2.6%) | 11 (4.8%) | 19 (8.2%) | 92 (39.8%) | 103 (44.6%) | 4.19 | 0.91 |
| Poor IR results in higher cost of operations | 7 (3.0%) | 15 (6.5%) | 23 (10.0%) | 89 (38.5%) | 97 (42.0%) | 4.10 | 0.95 |
| Poor IR undermines teamwork and collaboration | 8 (3.5%) | 14 (6.1%) | 22 (9.5%) | 90 (38.9%) | 97 (42.0%) | 4.12 | 0.96 |

(Source: Author's own elaboration)

Table 7 confirms H1, H2, and H3 as statistically significant (all $p < 0.01$), indicating that IR relevance positively affects performance, poor IR negatively affects performance, and reward systems moderate the IR-performance link. The chi-square results demonstrate that IR is a critical determinant of organizational outcomes in Ojo Local Government, reinforcing theoretical frameworks such as contingency theory and human capital theory (Kafouros et al., 2024; Mishra, 2025; Peng et al., 2025). Reward systems, as a moderating factor, align employee incentives with IR mechanisms, amplifying cooperative behavior and commitment, thereby supporting findings from the strategic HRM literature showing that well-designed incentives improve alignment between employee motivation and organizational goals (Muralidharan, 2025; Zulkarnain et al., 2024). Overall, these findings suggest that IR interventions, complemented by appropriate reward structures, are essential for fostering organizational resilience and performance.

Table 7 Chi-Square test results for hypotheses

| Hypothesis Statement | χ^2 Value | df | p-value | Decision |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----|---------|----------|
| H1: There is a significant relationship between the relevance of IR and performance | 52.63 | 4 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| H2: Poor IR significantly affects organizational performance | 47.21 | 4 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| H3: Reward systems moderate the relationship between IR relevance and performance | 39.84 | 4 | 0.000 | Accepted |

(Source: Author's own elaboration)

3.2 Discussion and hypotheses evaluation

The results extend the literature on strategic HRM and IR in emerging economies, demonstrating that institutional quality, employee engagement, and industry dynamism interact to shape organizational outcomes (Kafouros et al., 2024; Mishra, 2025). Organizations that implement structured IR frameworks can better leverage human capital, fostering innovation and improving service delivery. The demographic profile highlights that an educated, experienced workforce is more likely to respond to participatory IR practices, emphasizing the importance of aligning HRM strategies with workforce capabilities and expectations (Zulkarnain et al., 2024; Hina et al., 2025). Poor IR has both operational and strategic consequences. Beyond immediate productivity losses, weak IR erodes trust and commitment, reducing long-term sustainability and resilience (Rahim et al., 2025; Christina et al., 2025).

Reward systems amplify the positive effects of effective IR by aligning employee motivation with organizational objectives. This resonates with contingency theory, which posits that organizational performance is contingent on the integration of HRM practices, IR structures, and incentives (Peng et al., 2025; Muralidharan, 2025). The findings underscore that IR is not peripheral but central to performance optimization. Structured communication, grievance handling, and participatory mechanisms foster commitment and cooperation, while poorly managed IR increases costs and risks. Organizations in emerging economies can achieve a competitive advantage by integrating IR practices with strategic HRM and reward policies (Kafouros et al., 2024; Hina, 2024).

The study set out to test three hypotheses on the role of industrial relations (IR) in shaping organizational performance. The results from the chi-square analysis (Table 7) confirmed that all three hypotheses were statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. The implications of these findings are discussed below.

For the first hypothesis, the results indicate that IR practices strongly contribute to organizational performance. Table 5 showed high mean scores across items such as improved communication ($M = 4.23$), conflict resolution ($M = 4.11$), and motivation ($M = 4.16$), confirming that respondents perceived IR as central to performance outcomes. This finding aligns with the systems theory of industrial relations (Dunlop, 1958; updated by Kaufman, 2020), which posits that effective interaction between management, employees, and institutions promotes organizational equilibrium. Recent studies also support this view: Otoo et al. (2021) found that effective IR mechanisms enhance employee morale and productivity, while Adeniji and Salau (2022) demonstrated that strong IR practices reduce turnover and foster organizational competitiveness. Thus, the present study reinforces the empirical evidence that IR is a performance enabler in contemporary organizations. For the second hypothesis, H2, the chi-square results demonstrate that poor industrial relations significantly undermine organizational performance. Table 6 showed strong agreement that poor IR reduces productivity ($M = 4.17$), disrupts communication ($M = 4.16$), and increases absenteeism ($M = 4.14$).

This outcome is consistent with social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which emphasizes reciprocity in employer–employee relationships. When employees perceive fairness, trust, and open communication, they are more likely to reciprocate with commitment and high performance (Adele, 2022). Empirical evidence indicates that toxic workplace climates, characterized by harassment, organizational politics, or ineffective conflict management, tend to increase employees' turnover intentions, absenteeism, and psychological distress, thereby undermining organizational performance (Malola et al., 2024). Conversely, organizations that adopt effective conflict management strategies and foster supportive organizational climates report higher employee engagement, retention, and resilience, thereby reducing negative externalities and supporting sustainable productivity (Longe, 2015).

The final hypothesis, H3, was supported, suggesting that mechanisms such as reward systems and conflict-handling methods moderate the relationship between IR relevance and organizational performance. Respondents highlighted in Table 6 that poor IR negatively affects service delivery ($M =$

4.19) and competitiveness ($M = 4.27$), indicating that organizations that fail to address IR concerns face significant risks.

This aligns with the contingency theory of management (Fiedler, 1967; Donaldson, 2021), which argues that managerial practices should adapt to contextual realities to optimize performance. Empirical research further supports this perspective: performance-linked reward systems have been shown to reduce workplace conflict and improve motivation (Figueiredo, Margaça, & Sánchez García, 2025), while organizations with effective grievance and dispute-resolution mechanisms experience higher employee satisfaction and retention (Adele, 2022; Nwankwo, Nkechi, & Adanso, 2023).

3.3 Policy implications

The findings of this study have significant implications for organizational policy and broader labor-market regulation. The strong positive link between effective industrial relations and organizational performance suggests that organizations should institutionalize robust frameworks that promote trust, communication, and fairness. From an economic perspective, healthy industrial relations reduce transaction costs associated with labor disputes, absenteeism, and turnover, thereby increasing allocative efficiency and labor productivity (Macchiavello & Malmendier, 2024). In contrast, poor industrial relations generate negative externalities, including disruptions to workflow, inefficiency in resource utilization, and diminished competitiveness (Nwankwo et al., 2023; Adele, 2022).

At the organizational level, management should implement policies that integrate employee participation in decision-making, regular dialogue mechanisms, and fair grievance-handling procedures. Such policies foster social capital and reduce information asymmetries between employers and employees, thereby strengthening organizational resilience in competitive markets. Reward systems, when aligned with performance, not only motivate employees but also ensure a fair distribution of organizational gains, enhancing both efficiency and equity (Figueiredo et al., 2025). This resonates with efficiency wage theory, which posits that firms can achieve productivity gains when employees perceive compensation as fair and commensurate with their effort.

From a macroeconomic standpoint, the results highlight the need for policymakers in emerging economies, including Nigeria, to strengthen labor market institutions. Promoting effective industrial relations frameworks through collective bargaining and dispute resolution mechanisms can reduce industrial conflicts and economic losses associated with strikes. Research shows that robust collective-bargaining systems and stable institutional frameworks help manage labor disputes and contribute to macroeconomic stability. (Ukokhe & Mercy Florah, 2022; Nwuzor & Udoikah, 2024; Brandl & Ibsen, 2018). A well-regulated IR system contributes to industrial peace, which is a precondition for sustainable investment, economic diversification, and job creation (Otoo et al., 2021). Furthermore, strengthening labor policies to incorporate continuous employee upskilling helps organizations adapt to technological change and globalization, reducing the risk of structural unemployment (Adeniji & Salau, 2022).

The policy implication is that organizations and governments must view industrial relations not merely as a compliance requirement but as a strategic economic tool. By reducing conflict-related inefficiencies, promoting equity, and ensuring alignment between labor and organizational objectives, effective industrial relations policies can enhance firm-level competitiveness and support broader economic growth.

CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates that effective industrial relations (IR) are central to sustaining organizational performance, particularly within contemporary work environments where employee engagement, institutional trust, and strategic human resource management are vital. The main findings indicate that strong IR frameworks enhance communication, fairness, conflict resolution, and employee loyalty, which collectively improve organizational stability, productivity, and competitiveness. Reward systems were also found to moderate the relationship between IR and performance, reinforcing the importance of aligning incentives with organizational goals (Kafouros et al., 2024; Mishra, 2025; Peng et al., 2025). The evidence underscores that robust IR practices promote fairness, equity, and mutual respect between employers and employees, fostering organizational resilience. These findings are consistent with recent literature emphasizing the role of strategic HRM practices in driving organizational commitment, employee satisfaction, and operational efficiency (Hina et al., 2025; Muralidharan, 2025; Zulkarnain et al., 2024). In emerging economies, where institutional quality and industry dynamism are evolving rapidly, well-structured IR systems serve as critical mechanisms for enhancing firm performance and mitigating risks associated with poor labor relations (Kafouros et al., 2024).

The study has several limitations. First, data were collected from a single local government area in Lagos State, which may limit the generalizability of findings to other organizations or sectors. Second, the research employed a cross-sectional design, making it challenging to capture the dynamic and longitudinal effects of IR practices on performance. Third, the study relied primarily on self-reported measures, which may be subject to response bias. Future research could address these limitations by employing multi-site, longitudinal, and mixed-method designs to provide deeper insights into the causal mechanisms linking IR, HRM practices, and organizational outcomes. Exploring the role of technology-driven HRM and green/eco-conscious IR practices on organizational sustainability also represents a promising avenue for future studies (Rahim et al., 2025; Christina et al., 2025).

The audience likely to benefit from these findings includes HR practitioners, industrial relations specialists, organizational managers, policymakers, and scholars studying labor economics or HRM in emerging economies. Practitioners can leverage the results to design effective communication channels, grievance handling procedures, and reward systems that align employee behavior with organizational objectives. Policymakers can use the insights to craft labor regulations that promote industrial peace, employee engagement, and national competitiveness, while researchers can build upon these findings to explore sector-specific IR dynamics or cross-country comparisons.

In summary, industrial relations should not be viewed merely as an administrative function but as a strategic economic tool. Organizations and governments must adopt policies and practices that balance efficiency with fairness, ensure employee engagement, and integrate reward and training systems to enhance commitment and performance. Embedded within a supportive institutional framework, industrial relations have the potential to transform organizational performance, foster sustainable HR practices, and contribute meaningfully to economic growth and competitiveness (Hina, 2024; Peng et al., 2025; Mishra, 2025).

RESEARCH ETHICS, INFORMED CONSENT, AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the author's institution and applicable national regulations. Formal research ethics committee approval was not required, as the study involved a self-administered questionnaire survey of adult employees in a local government organization and did not collect sensitive personal data. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, their right to withdraw at any time, and

the assurance of confidentiality; by completing the questionnaire, they provided their informed consent. The author declares no conflict of interest.

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