

THE ROLE OF TRADE UNIONS IN INFLUENCING EMPLOYEES WELFARE: A CASE OF MUHIMBILI NATIONAL HOSPITAL

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ABSTRACT

Trade unions have not played their role effectively on improving staff welfare at workplace in Tanzania and this has been contributed by various challenges they face within these organisations. This study focused on the following specific objectives, to explore workers perception regarding the significance of trade union, also the study kept a focus on determining the welfare amenities provided at Muhimbili National Hospital (MNH). This study, therefore, serves to identify the role of trade union especially the one at the Muhimbili National Hospital in influencing better staff welfare. In general this study has exposed the significance of improving staff welfare at workplaces, and the consequences of failing to bridge the gap between employees' grievances and management responses through the forum of workers' representatives, alias trade unions as the one responsible for that role. However this study also revealed the challenges that hinder proper functioning of the trade unions in influencing the improvement of staff welfare. The conclusion of the study saw that Trade Unions in Tanzania still have a very frail role in improving welfare of employees. It is necessary for trade unions to ensure that they improve the relations between them and the management of the organizations where their members are found, and Trade Union should fulfil their basic and primary role of promoting and protecting the interests of its members in all aspects including improved staff welfare.

Keywords: Trade Union, Employee Welfare, Muhimbili National Hospital

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In developing countries, the right to form a Union and bargain collectively protects workers from exploitative and abusive conditions at work and puts pressure on employers to share productivity gains with their employees. The protection of basic worker and human rights in developing nations thus necessitates unionization so that the working population can reap the benefits of economic growth (Ghosh & Geetika, 2007).

Despite the existence of a number of trade unions, in Tanzania aimed at protecting workers' interests, there are claims that these myriads of trade unions have had little impact in protecting the workers interests which includes improving staff welfare as well. The case in point is that of the Muhimbili National Hospital doctor's strikes of January 2012 and June 2012 respectively that lasted for about two weeks paralysing all the services at the hospital pitying patients with no services and even causing others to die due to lack of attention. According to the sources that followed up the matter, the staff complained against poor working conditions namely, poor staff welfare, insufficient salaries, non-payment of overtime allowances, and generally, poor working environment posing a great risk to their health.

Throughout the Tanzania history Trade Unions have played a crucial role in making workplaces a good place to work (Ghosh & Geetika, 2007). The essence of allowing Trade Unions participation by employers to employees or the, Union representation and collective bargaining have been the keys to the growth of a stable working population in developed economies. Trade unions have made it possible for workers to gain a more equitable share of the wealth that they create; they are also able to improve working conditions and help workers gain job security. Changes in the political, social and educational environments regarding awareness of rights – such as the right to organise, the right to bargain, and the right to settle terms and conditions of employment – have caused worker unions to spring up to protect and further workers' interests. Thus, with the establishment of minimum wages, norms for mandatory working hours, provisions for health and safety, overall improvements in working conditions and unionisation has become instrumental in improving the quality of life of workers (*ibid*).

Different studies around the world such as that of Bezuidenhout, (2000), Ghosh, & Geetika (2007) and Budd (2005) have shown the side effects caused by new ways of production reveal themselves only gradually. These studies suggest numerous reasons behind the emergence of labour movement. According to Tannenbaum (1921), the machine is the cause and labour movement is the result. Hoxie (1921) believes that trade unions appeared as a group expression of the social situation in which workers found themselves expressing their working environment and situations and as remedial programmes with particular aims, policies and methods. Perlman (1928) believes that trade unionism arose from job consciousness and scarcity of job opportunities.

While there might be uncertainty about health implications of a certain job, there is initially often simply ignorance about health implications, sometimes just absence of any doubt (Schneider, 2005,). When workers start sensing that something is going wrong, that working conditions are causing health problems, these claims are often met with doubt, not only by employers, but also by insurance companies or even the government. These analyses also clearly demonstrate that worker movements and joint collective actions by individuals, are required to raise political awareness, to lobby for changes in work conditions and to eventually bring about regulatory changes towards better Occupational Health and Safety measures (Schneider, 2005,).

Similar conclusions about the importance of worker movements for triggering broader support not only for the improvement of working conditions but also for the development of the modern welfare state can be drawn when looking at Germany. During the Industrial Revolution around 1850, the issues of poverty, working and living conditions of dependent workers caused organizations to be created enabling workers to express their own interests (*ibid*).

In India; Trade Union Act, 1926 sec.2 has defined trade union as any combination whether temporary or permanent, formed primarily for the purpose of regulating the relations between the workmen and employers, between workmen and workmen, between employers and employer or for imposing restrictive conditions on the conduct of any trade or business and includes any federation of two or more trade unions (Gupta, 2007).

In South Africa, South Africa's trade union movement, the largest and most disciplined on the continent, has played an influential role in determining labour market and industrial relations policies in the country. Its role in dismantling apartheid legislation and practices in the workplace remain one of its major achievements. During the apartheid era it succeeded in making employers appreciate the benefits of negotiating with employees through their representative unions. The fruits of these negotiations included agreements on union recognition, wages, and conditions of service, workplace restructuring and retrenchments. Wildcat strikes - a regular occurrence in the 1970s through late 1980s - have significantly decreased, thanks in part to stipulations in the Labour Relations Act giving workers and their unions redress through mediation, conciliation and arbitration, (Nedlac Annual report, 2002)

In Tanzania, trade union movement has its roots in the 1940s. Since then, it has passed through several phases. In 1955, 17 trade unions established the Tanganyika Federation of Labour (TFL). It worked hand in hand with the then ruling party (TANU) and struggled together with the political party for independence, which was gained in 1961 (Kapinga 1986).

In 1964, the government enacted the NUTA act, which disbanded the TFL and established the National Union of Tanganyika Workers (NUTA) as the sole trade union body in the country. The act crushed the limited autonomy that remained within TFL and was the beginning of the monolithic system of the union movement which dominated the movement until the early 1990s (*ibid*).

The NUTA leadership was appointed by the President of the Republic, and its main objective was to promote the policies of TANU. The political changes in the country, with TANU and ASP (the ruling party in Zanzibar) merging and forming the CCM in 1977, fostered the need for a trade union for the whole country. For this reason JUWATA was established in 1978. JUWATA, as a mass organization of the ruling party (CCM), had, among other functions to propagate party policies and make workers aware of their basic rights and obligations (Mbelle, 2000)

Despite the existence of number of trade unions in different organizations in Tanzania to protect the worker's interests, there are claims that trade unions have not played well their role of protecting the workers interests which includes the staff well fare. This study therefore focuses on assessing the role played by the trade unions in improving employee's welfare in essential services.

The overall objective of this study is to explore the role of trade unions on improving employee's welfare in essential services. This study focuses on the following specific objectives, to explore on workers perception regarding the significance of trade union, also the study will focus on determining the welfare amenities provided at Muhimbili National Hospital

(MNH), it will explore on efforts made by trade unions to improve staff welfare and lastly it will determine challenges facing trade unions in essential services.

2.0 THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Trade Union means any number of employees associated together for the purpose, whether by itself or with other purposes, of regulating relationship between employees and their employers or the employers' Association to which the employers belong (ELRA, 2004).

According to the Oxford dictionary **Employee Welfare** or **Labour Welfare** means "the efforts to make life worth living for workmen." In the words of Arthur James Todd, "Labour welfare means anything done for the comfort and improvement, intellectual or social, of the employees over and above the wages paid which is not a necessity of the industry." (1) According an ILO Report (1947), "Workers" welfare may be understood as including such services facilities and amenities which may be established in, or in the vicinity of undertakings to perform their work in healthy and congenial surroundings and to avail of facilities which improve their health and bring high morale." (2) The committee on Labour Welfare (1969) defined it as such services, facilities and amenities as adequate canteen, rest and recreation facilities, sanitary and medical facilities, arrangements for travel to and from work and for accommodation of workers employed at a distance from their homes, and such other services, amenities and facilities, including social security measures as contribute to improve the conditions under which workers are employed. According to The Labour Investigation Committee (1946), employee welfare means anything done for intellectual physical moral and economic betterment of the workers, whether by employers, by Government or by other agencies, over and above what is laid down by law, or what is normally expected on the part of the contracted benefits for which workers may have bargained" (Gupta, 2007).

It is argued that the main objective of trade union is to promote the interest of its members, due regard being paid to the interest of the total labour force and to the greater national interest. To achieve this aim, trade unions have a duty to maintain the viability of the undertaking by ensuring cooperation with management in measures to promote efficiency and good industrial relations.

As represented by Ewing (2005), trade Unions have service function; a representation function; a regulatory function; a government function; and a public administration function. As far as the trade unions are concerned in the industrial relations the theoretical review will take much look on the Industrial relations as whole. Industrial relations scenario and factors affecting it have been perceived differently by different practitioners and theorists. Some viewed Industrial Relations problems in terms of class conflict, some in terms of mutuality of interests of different groups and some in terms of consequence of interactions of various factors with an organization and outside it. This lead to various approaches in explaining the concept of Industrial relations but for the purpose of this study only System Approach will be reviewed.

Is inequality a necessary part of any society? Conflict theory evolved in the late twentieth century in response to the perceived limitations of structural functionalism, the dominant sociological theory in post-World War II America (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). Yet, the foundation of conflict theory rests largely upon the work of Karl Marx, a nineteenth-century philosopher and revolutionist. Conflict theory recognizes the existence of conflicts or inequalities in the society and requires the society to perceive them in a positive way sources of development in the society.

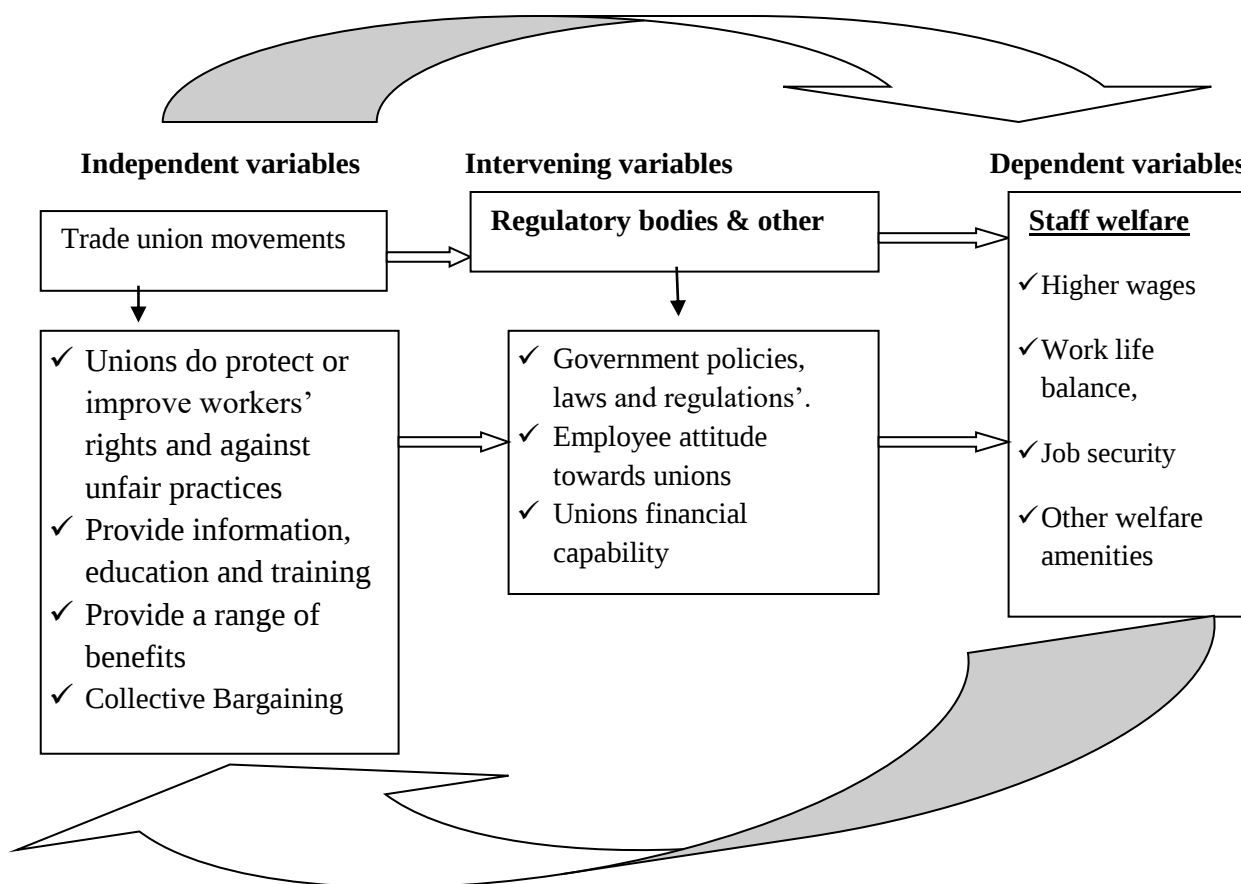
From the conflict theory view, labour movements have to be taken in positive manner as a necessary part of a society (working class). The origin of the labour movement can be traced back in the preindustrial revolution period where as the concept of trade union movement is a later development which is connected with post industrial revolution period. Carl Landau writes "Labour organizations too sure existed even in the Middle Ages, but only in a clandestine manner or under camouflage, and as long as they could not operate openly, they had to be kept small and could be effective only in a few places".

These labour organizations of the middle age were of serf labour but their protest made labour movement all the same. The labour movement gets started when the question of exploitation comes into the picture. Therefore this study has shown that Trade Union as one of the key Actors in the industrial relations has an important role to play so as to ensure there is good and stable Industrial relations at workplace. Therefore, this study has shown that Trade Union as one of the key Actors in the industrial relations has an important role to play so as to ensure there is good and stable Industrial relations at workplace.

Trade unions are a legitimate system for organizing workers to voice their rights and grievances. Without unions, companies would become either too paternalistic or too dictatorial (Thomas, 2005). Responsible unions play an important role in maintaining cordial relations between management and labour. The aims and objectives of the major trade unions in India are seen to vary according to their political ideologies (Ratnam, 2006). For instance, some unions are influenced by Leftist

principles aimed at overhauling the capitalist mode of production as a whole. However, irrespective of trade unions' political affiliations, their generic functions may be categorised as follows:

The diagram bellow explains the relationship existing between the independent and depend variables, staff welfare depends much on the trade unions movements and collective bargaining.



From the above diagram, the trade union movements and collective bargaining helps to improve the working conditions, work life balance, wages and other staff welfare amenities at work place, since the trade unions have strong bargaining power against the employers on various matters concerning the staff at the workplace than an individual employee can do, this in turn helps to improve the staff welfare at work place.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study the quantitative approach was used because it sought to explore on the role of trade unions on improving staff welfare in essential services, the data collected were numerically presented and analyzed. The responses of the various respondents were first coded and expressed in percentages. The researchers tried as much as possible to be detached from the subject of the study or respondent. This approach established the cause-effect relationship. For the purpose of this study, a case study design has been employed. Through this design researchers were able to collect in depth information the staff at Muhimbili National Hospital. The study employed the self-administered questionnaire as a means of data collection.

The study obtained a list of all the population of 1573 staffs in Muhimbili National Hospital and randomly selected/draw a sample of 60 medical staffs that stand as a Unit of analysis as shown in the table below. By using stratified random sampling reseachers divided the population into groups based on their characteristics features of each group and select a sample as shown in the table below. This study has used stratified random sampling to divide the population of the medical staff into strata's of Doctors, Enrolled nurse midwives, Nursing Officers, and then using simple random sampling to select individual from each strata or subgroup to form a sample for the study.

Table 1.1 shows the sample selected

S/n	Sample type	Sample size	Percentage	Sampling method used and stratified randomly sample.
01	Doctors	25	41.66	Simple random sampling and stratified sampling.
02	Nursing Officers	25	41.66	Simple random sampling and stratified sampling.
03	Enrolled Nurse midwives	10	16.67	Simple random sampling and stratified randomly sampling.
	TOTAL	60	100	

Source; Muhimbili National Hospital Staff (2017).

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed at exploring the role of trade unions on improving welfare of staff at MNH and the following responses given in a table below were the results that have been discussed.

RESPONSES	YES		NO	
The significance of being a Trade Union member	18	37.3%	32	62.7
The benefit to staff being the members of Trade Union	8	44%	9	50%
Welfare services provided at MNH	28	54.9%	22	45.1%
The satisfaction with the welfare services provided at MNH	12	25.5%	38	74.5%
Efforts made by Trade Union to improve staff welfare at MNH	9	19.6%	41	80.4%
The existing relationship between the Trade Union and management of MNH.	32	62.7%	18	37.3%
The existing labour law has offered favourable environment for Trade Unions in essential services	7	15.7%	43	84.3%

Source; Researchers' field work (2017)

4.1 The significance of being a Trade Union member

As stated by Thomas (2015) Trade unions are the legitimate system for organizing workers to voice their rights and grievances. Without unions, companies would become either too paternalistic or too dictatorial, this study findings shows that only 18 respondents account for 37.3% were the members of trade union which is TUGHE while 32 of them account for 62.7% were not members of trade union instead were the members of the professional associations which are Medical doctors Association of Tanzania (MAT) and Tanzania Nurses Association (TANNA). From these findings it can be concluded that workers at MNH perceive it as, it of no significance for them to join the trade union rather it is much better for them to remain in their professional associations like MAT and TANNA. Among the reasons given for not joining it, they don't know the purpose and importance of it. Despite the fact that findings indicates that majority of workers in health sector perceive there is no need for them to join the trade union as they have not seen the significance of being members in such Trade unions, this does not change the truth that the essence of allowing Trade Unions participation by employers to employees or the, Union representation and collective bargaining have been the keys to the growth of a stable working population.(Ghosh & Geetika, 2007)

4.2 The benefit of staff being the members of Trade Union:

A study by Bacon (1999), states that in industrialized world workers are becoming more insecure due to the decline of trade unionism as primary institution upon which the employees are relied for protective regulation at work. And this can be realized from the results of this study where by the staff of MHN who are members of Trade Union were asked to know whether it is beneficial to them or not, the result indicate that among the 18 respondents who were members of the trade union 9 of them said it is not beneficial to them while 8 of them said it is beneficial. Although some of the employees are members of trade union at MNH but the Trade Union have not played well their role for the members to find it beneficial to them and this might be one of the reason for it to have few members as it has failed to attract new members. These findings are also supported by Gupta (2007) who also indicated the need of trade unions to promote employees welfare so that it can attract more staff to join them.

4.3 Welfare services provided at MNH

As supported by Paragshir (2013), a trade union also improves the living and the working conditions of the employees. Study findings indicate that 28 respondents accounting for 54.9% said no welfare services are provided at MNH,

and 22 of them which equals to 45.1% said there are welfare services provided at MNH. The study findings shows that the welfare amenities were provided by MNH for its staff, these include, health insurance, provision of protective gears, health and safety trainings, economic empowerment through established SACCOS, and transport service. The welfare services provided are not enough, the management of MNH need rethink for more welfare services for its staff to avoid unnecessary strikes

4.4 The satisfaction with the welfare services provided at MNH

Study findings indicate that 38 respondents accounting for 74.5% said they are not satisfied with the welfare services provided at MNH, while only 12 respondents accounting for 25.5% said they were satisfied with the welfare services provided at MNH. From these findings it can be concluded that the welfare services provided at MNH are not satisfactory to its staff, and this is also supported by the medical doctors strike of January 2012 and June 2012 where by medical doctors were claiming for improved work environment, salary increase and other welfare services like risk allowance, emergency night call allowance, self drive transport, and house allowance (NIPASHE, 10th.february, 2012).

4.5 Efforts made by Trade Union to improve staff welfare at MNH

According to Glendon and Booth (1982), there is active participation of Trade Unions at organizational level in health and safety and welfare measures in Britain, this is quite different with MNH from the findings it shows that 41 respondents accounting for 80.4% said no efforts made by the trade union to improve staff welfare at MNH while only 9 of them accounting for 19.6% said there are some efforts made by trade union to improve staff welfare at MNH. Also from the study findings it can be concluded that little efforts has been made by the trade union on improving staff welfare at MNH, the trade union including TUGHE are responsible to ensure the staff welfare at work place and this supported by the literature that the primary function of a trade union is to promote and protect the interest of its members (Perlman, 1928; Hoxie, 1921) and this includes the staff welfare.

4.6 The existing relationship between the Trade Union and management of MNH

The study findings indicated that, 32 respondents account for 62.7% said there is bad relationship between the management and the Trade union at MNH, while 18 of them accounting for 37.3% said there is good relationship between the management and trade union at MNH. The existing relationship between the trade union and the management of MNH is not good and this may also be a reason for improper functioning of the trade union as the functioning of the trade union at workplace also depends much on the co-operation they get from the management. Trade unions have the vital role of maintaining good relationship between the management and employees as they represent employees at workplace .Trade unions are a legitimate system for organizing workers to voice their rights and grievances. Without unions, companies would become either too paternalistic or too dictatorial (Thomas, 2005). Responsible unions play an important role in maintaining cordial relations between management and labour (Ratnam, 2006)

4.7 The existing labour law has offered favourable environment for Trade Unions in essential services:

The study findings shows that 43 respondents which equals to 84.3% said, the existing labour laws do not offer favourable environment for the trade unions in essential services, while 7 respondents account for 15.7% said, the existing labour law offer the favourable environment for trade unions in essential services. Most of the respondents complained on the number of prohibitions put in the labour laws and limited rights employees in essential services they have. this is also evident by the literature reviews where by some legal provision complained are, No person shall take part in a strike or a lockout or in any way conduct himself in a manner contemplating or in furtherance of a strike or lockout that person is engaged in an essential services referred to in section 77(ELRA, 2004, sec.76 (1)) and A person engaged in essential services may strike and lock out if and only if there is collective agreement providing for minimum services during a strike or lockout and that agreement has been approved by the essential services committee,(ELRA,2004,sec.76(2,a&b)

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS'

The above discussion has clearly indicated that Trade Unions in Tanzania still have a very frail role in improving welfare of employees. Based on the summarized findings of the study the following conclusions were made. Trade unions have not played their role effectively on improving staff welfare at workplace in Tanzania which has been contributed by various challenges they face in organisations, these include weak financial position, absence of paid office, multiplicity of unions, the problem of recognition, apathy of members, uneven growth, opposition from employers, unfavourable legal environment for trade union movements in essential services.

It is necessary therefore for trade unions to ensure that they improve the relations between them and the management of the organizations where their members are found. Moreover, trade unions should also make sure that they have knowledgeable leaders on the aspect of labour laws, whereby this could improve their bargaining power as this will ensure provision of better employee services. They should also fulfil their basic and primary role of promoting and protecting the interests of its members in all aspects including improved staff welfare.

It is therefore recommended that:

- i) Trade unions should educate the staff at different workplaces, the importance of trade unions at work place so that they can join them, further they should have good and regular communication with their members so that they can know problems facing members immediately as they occur and solve them at a time so that members can find it beneficial for them,
- ii) Regarding the importance of essential services and the legal prohibitions the government has made to employees under essential services, the government should make regular inspections in essential services to uncover the employees' problems as soon as they occur and take immediate actions, this can either be through the essential services committee or formulating another body to execute it.
- iii) Trade unions should try as much as they can to reduce membership fees to attract more members and find alternative sources of finance like having profitable business projects, so that they can be economically stable and powerful.
- iv) Trade unions in co-operation with the organisation managements should ensure that employees get the satisfactory welfare services at workplace all the time so as to avoid unnecessary conflicts which cost both employees and the organisation at large.
- v) Trade union leaders should ensure that they have good understanding of the labour laws so that they can be able to protect the workers' rights,

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