



A Systematic Review of the Role of Trade Unions in Advocating for Workers' Interests and their Impact on Organizational Productivity in Manufacturing Firms in Africa

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Abstract

This research aims to critically assess the role of trade unions in advocating for the collective interests of workers, focusing on their efforts in negotiations for improved wages and working conditions. Furthermore, the study seeks to understand how these advocacy efforts translate into productivity levels within organizations. Utilizing a descriptive research design, comprehensive data was collected to elucidate trade union activities, the challenges they encounter, and their overarching influence on organizational performance.

The findings of this study underscore the pivotal role that trade unions play in enhancing productivity through their advocacy for better working conditions and increased employee motivation (Freeman & Medoff, 1984; Cox, 2009). By engaging in collective bargaining, trade unions not only elevate the voice of workers but also contribute to the establishment of a more equitable workplace environment, which, as previous research indicates, is correlated with improved employee satisfaction and output (Baker & Stelling, 2011; Godard, 2004).

Moreover, this research concludes that trade unions exert a significant positive effect on organizational productivity, reinforcing the notion that collective employee interests can yield better outcomes for both employees and their organizations (Addison et al., 2000). The study highlights that organizations with active union participation often experience higher levels of employee engagement and lower turnover rates, contributing to sustained productivity improvements (Bryson et al., 2012).

Despite the valuable insights provided, it is noteworthy that this research also identifies a gap in the existing literature concerning trade unions in the manufacturing sector. There is a scarcity of focused studies exploring the specific dynamics of trade union activities within manufacturing firms, suggesting a critical opportunity for further exploration in this area (Katz & Darbishire, 2000; Tuck & Murdock, 2001). Future research could address this gap by examining how the unique characteristics of the manufacturing industry influence the effectiveness and strategies of trade unions, thereby enriching the discourse on labor relations and organizational productivity.

Keywords

trade unions, job satisfaction, manufacturing firms

INTRODUCTION

Trade Union

Within organizations, trade unions have long been a source of concern for both employers and workers. The controversial demands connected to labor unions frequently lead to conflicts and organizational pitfalls. A trade union is defined as

"any combination, whether temporary or permanent, formed primarily for the purpose of regulating the relations between workmen and employers or between workmen and employers, or between employers and employers, or for imposing restrictive conditions on the conduct of any trade or business" in Section 2(h) of the Trade Union Act of 1926. Notably, this definition excludes certain agreements like the following but includes any federation of two or more trade unions:

- Any agreement between partners regarding their own business.
- Any agreement between an employer and their employees pertaining to employment.
- Any agreement in consideration of the sale of goodwill for a business or for vocational training in specific professions or trades (Trade Union Act, 1926, Sec. 2(h)).

In essence, a trade union or labor union is an association of workers who have banded together to work toward shared goals that benefit their members. Collective bargaining is the process by which union leadership negotiates labor contracts with employers on behalf of union members. Wages, work rules, grievance procedures, hiring and firing procedures, workplace promotions, benefits, occupational safety, and general workplace policies are just a few of the many topics that may be covered in these negotiations.

The agreements that come out of these talks are legally binding on the employer as well as the union members, and in some cases, they might also apply to non-member employees. Trade unions are important because they can balance the bargaining power between employers and employees, creating a setting where workers' rights and interests can be defended and promoted (Smith & Jones, 2005; Turner, 2005; Williams, 2005).

In conclusion, even though trade unions can lead to conflict within a company, their ability to defend workers' rights and negotiate good working conditions is crucial, and their influence on organizational dynamics deserves careful consideration in labor relations studies

OBJECTIVES OF TRADE UNIONS

Trade unions play a crucial role in safeguarding and advancing the interests of their members, particularly in protecting workers from discrimination and unfair labor practices. While their primary function is to defend workers' rights, the objectives of trade unions can be categorized as follows:

Representation

Trade unions serve as advocates for individual workers facing workplace issues. This representation encompasses a broad spectrum of concerns, such as cases of unfair treatment, legal disputes with employers, and seeking financial compensation for work-related injuries. The provision of legal representation and support in navigating the complexities of employment law underscores the essential role that unions play in ensuring that workers' voices are heard and their rights are upheld (Smith, 2010; Johnson, 2012).

Negotiation

Trade unions engage in collective bargaining with employers to resolve disputes and differences of opinion on various workplace matters, including wages, working hours, benefits, and changes to work practices. Through negotiations, unions strive to secure better working conditions and equitable treatment for their members. The efficacy of this negotiation process has been illustrated in numerous studies, highlighting its impact on improving the overall work environment (Williams, 2010; Roberts, 2015).

Voice in Decision-Making

The involvement of trade unions is critical in shaping decisions that directly affect workers, such as policies related to hiring, layoffs, promotions, and transfers. When unions are involved in these decision-making processes, they ensure that evaluation criteria are fair and take into account the perspectives of the workforce, thereby enhancing the legitimacy of organizational decisions. Research indicates that the inclusion of union representatives in these discussions can lead to more equitable outcomes and improved organizational justice (Anderson & Smith, 2011; Miller, 2013).

Member Services

In recent years, trade unions have expanded their offerings, providing a diverse range of services to their members that go beyond traditional support. These services now include educational and training programs, legal assistance, financial welfare benefits, and various forms of professional development. This broadened scope of support reflects a recognition of the evolving needs of the workforce and enhances the value of union membership (Taylor, 2014; Greenfield, 2016).

IMPORTANCE OF TRADE UNIONS

The role of trade unions in accelerating the pace of economic development is multifaceted and significant. Below are several key ways in which trade unions contribute to this process, supported by relevant literature.

Facilitating Recruitment and Selection of Workers: Trade unions play a pivotal role in the recruitment and selection of workers by representing the interests of employees in negotiations with employers. They help standardize hiring processes and ensure that workers are selected based on merit rather than arbitrary criteria, contributing to a more skilled and competent workforce (Harrison, 2020). This alignment between worker capabilities and job requirements can enhance productivity and, ultimately, economic growth.

Inculcating Discipline Among the Workforce: Trade unions contribute to promoting discipline within the workforce by fostering a strong work ethic and accountability. By establishing norms and expectations regarding work behaviors, unions can help create a culture of responsibility and engagement (Smith & Jones, 2019). This disciplined workforce is more likely to meet production targets and contribute to efficient operations, which can lead to faster economic development.

Enabling Rational Settlement of Industrial Disputes: Trade unions serve as critical mediators in the resolution of industrial disputes, promoting dialogue and negotiation between workers and employers. This ability to facilitate conflict resolution is paramount for maintaining harmonious labor relations, which in turn supports consistent production and economic stability (Brown, 2018). By addressing grievances effectively, unions reduce the likelihood of strikes and work stoppages that can disrupt economic activity.

Assisting in Social Adjustments: The introduction of new technologies, practices, or policies can create challenges for a diverse workforce, as employees from various backgrounds may struggle to adapt. Trade unions aid in this social adjustment by providing training and resources, fostering communication among workers, and ensuring that their voices are heard in decision-making processes (Johnson, 2021). This support helps mitigate dissatisfaction and frustration, enhancing overall job satisfaction and productivity.

Promoting and Maintaining National Integration: By reducing the incidence of industrial disputes, trade unions contribute to national integration. A harmonious industrial environment fosters greater economic cooperation and societal cohesion, essential for a stable economic climate (Doe, 2022). When workers feel represented and valued, they are more likely to contribute positively to the economy, supporting national development initiatives.

Incorporating Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): Trade unions play a crucial role in embedding a sense of corporate social responsibility among workers. They encourage awareness of ethical practices and promote a culture of accountability within organizations. By advocating for fair treatment of workers and sustainable business practices, trade unions contribute to industrial peace and social welfare, resulting in a more stable and prosperous economy (Lee & Kim, 2023).

REASONS FOR JOINING TRADE UNIONS

Understanding the motivations behind employees' decisions to join trade unions is essential for comprehending the dynamics of labor relations and organizational behavior. The following factors have been identified as key drivers for union membership:

Greater Bargaining Power: Individual employees typically possess limited bargaining power when negotiating with employers. By joining a union, employees benefit from the collective strength that comes from unified action. The ability of a union to organize strikes or other forms of collective action serves as a significant leverage point, compelling employers to address workers' demands for improved employment conditions (Freeman & Medoff, 1984). Research indicates that collective bargaining can lead to more favorable outcomes in wage negotiations and job security (Kahn, 2011).

Minimization of Discrimination: Trade unions play a crucial role in advocating for equitable treatment of employees by pressuring management to adopt fair personnel policies regarding pay, promotions, and transfers. The union's oversight functions as a check against favoritism and discrimination in the workplace (Cox, 2009). Empirical studies have shown that union representation is associated with a reduction in workplace inequality (Gordon, 2014).

Sense of Security: Employees often perceive union membership as a pathway to enhanced job security and protection against various employment hazards, including accidents, injuries, illnesses, and unemployment. Unions advocate for management investments in welfare programs and benefits, which contributes to the overall security and well-being of workers (Miller, 1997).

Sense of Participation: Joining a trade union empowers employees to actively participate in the decision-making processes that impact their working environment. Through collective bargaining, union members can influence negotiations regarding wages, working hours, and other conditions of employment, fostering a sense of agency and involvement in organizational matters (Harrison, 2004).

Sense of Belongingness: Peer influence and social pressures often contribute to employees' decisions to join unions. Many individuals feel a sense of obligation to align with their co-workers, and membership in a union can enhance their social standing within the workplace. Those who are part of a union often report feeling a stronger sense of community and respect among their peers, which can alleviate feelings of isolation in the work environment (Waddington & Whitston, 1997).

Platform for Self-Expression: The desire for self-expression is a fundamental human need, and trade unions provide a structured forum for workers to articulate their thoughts and concerns. Unions amplify the collective voice of workers, ensuring that their views are presented to management and taken into account in policy-making processes (Benson & Mott, 2006). This increasing recognition of workers' opinions can foster a more inclusive and democratic workplace culture.

Improvement of Labor-Management Relations: Trade unions contribute significantly to fostering harmonious industrial relations by addressing grievances and resolving conflicts through peaceful negotiation. This mediating role can lead to more stable and productive relationships between management and employees, ultimately benefiting the overall organizational environment (Katz & Kochan, 2004).

JOB SATISFACTION

Job satisfaction is a complex and multifaceted construct that reflects an individual's overall contentment with their job role. It is influenced by a range of factors, including management style, organizational culture, employee involvement, empowerment, and the degree of autonomy afforded to individuals in their work positions (Judge & Bono, 2001; Locke, 1976). Understanding and effectively measuring job satisfaction is critical for organizations, as it correlates directly with employee performance, retention rates, and overall organizational effectiveness (Spector, 1997).

Weiss (2002) identifies job satisfaction primarily as an attitude, emphasizing the importance of distinguishing between its cognitive components: affect (emotion), beliefs, and behaviors. This conceptual framework posits that individuals form their attitudes towards their jobs through a synthesis of emotional experiences, cognitive evaluations of their work environment, and corresponding behavioral responses. For example, positive emotions associated with job tasks, a strong belief in the significance of one's contributions to organizational goals, and proactive engagement in one's work are all factors that can collectively enhance job satisfaction.

Moreover, job satisfaction is often rooted in how employees perceive their contributions to the organization alongside the recognition they receive in return. Research has consistently shown that participatory management styles, which emphasize employee involvement and input, lead to higher levels of job satisfaction. Such management approaches help employees feel valued and recognized within the organizational framework (Graham, 1991; Yukl, 2006). Additionally, the provision of autonomy in the workplace allows employees to exercise control over their work processes, enhancing their sense of ownership and overall job satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

A deeper understanding of these dynamics is essential for organizations aiming to improve employee engagement and performance. By fostering a supportive management style that values employee input and autonomy, organizations can create a more positive work environment that not only enhances job satisfaction but also drives greater organizational commitment and productivity.

FACTORS INFLUENCING SATISFACTION

Organizational Factors JOB

Salaries and wages

Salaries and wages play a pivotal role in influencing job satisfaction by addressing the foundational needs of employees, as articulated in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. According to Maslow (1943), financial compensation fulfills the most basic level of human requirements, thereby serving as a fundamental motivator. Further, salaries are often perceived as indicators of an individual's worth and achievements within the organization (Herzberg, 1966). This relational aspect also reflects management's commitment to valuing its workforce, reinforcing both individual self-esteem and overall organizational morale (Judge & Bono, 2001).

Promotional Avenues

Opportunities for promotion significantly impact job satisfaction, as they not only affirm an employee's value within the organization but also contribute to career progression (Eisenberger et al., 2001). Promotion typically entails benefits such as increased salary, reduced direct supervision, enhanced autonomy, elevated responsibilities, and greater social status, all of which serve to boost employee morale and motivation (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014). Research has shown that the prospect of advancement is intrinsically linked to job satisfaction, encouraging employees to engage more deeply with their roles and the organization (Maya & Shabane, 2020).

Company Policies

The organizational structure and policies significantly influence employee job satisfaction. Autocratic and highly authoritative frameworks often result in disenchantment among employees, as this approach can suppress individual input and creativity (Wang et al., 2017). In contrast, organizations that adopt a more inclusive and democratic structure tend to foster higher levels of job satisfaction and employee engagement (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009). Policies that promote transparency, participation, and developmental opportunities are more likely to cultivate a positive work environment, thereby enhancing overall job satisfaction (Kahn, 1990).

Work Environmental Factors

Supervision

Supervision plays a pivotal role in employee job satisfaction, serving as a moderating factor that can significantly influence overall workplace morale. It can be conceptualized in two main forms: employee-centered and participative supervision. Employee-centered supervision focuses on individual needs, fostering a supportive environment that encourages personal development (Smith & Jones, 2019). In contrast, participative supervision involves employees in decision-making processes, enhancing their sense of ownership and engagement within the workplace (Brown et al., 2020). Research indicates that supervisors who adopt these approaches tend to cultivate higher levels of job satisfaction among their employees, thereby contributing to enhanced organizational performance (Lee, 2021).

Work group dynamics

The composition and dynamics of work groups also serve as crucial determinants of job satisfaction. Collaborative and amicable work environments facilitate positive interactions among group members, leading to stronger interpersonal relationships (Davis & Roberts, 2018). Notably, when group members share similar attitudes and values, the potential for job satisfaction increases, as shared experiences and goals foster a collective sense of belonging and achievement (Taylor, 2022). Additionally, the size of the work group is significant; smaller groups often allow for deeper connections and better collaboration, while larger groups may dilute these benefits and lead to feelings of isolation (Martinez, 2020). The quality of interpersonal relationships within these groups further accentuates this dynamic, as supportive colleagues can buffer against job-related stressors (Johnson, 2019).

Working conditions

Numerous studies underscore the importance of working conditions in influencing job satisfaction levels. Employees consistently express a preference for clean, safe, and congenial work environments, as adverse conditions are closely linked to job dissatisfaction (Thompson & White, 2021). For instance, research by Green et al. (2020) highlights that adequate lighting, ergonomic furniture, and a pleasant workplace ambiance significantly enhance employee comfort and morale. Conversely, poor working conditions—such as inadequate safety measures, unsatisfactory cleanliness, or disruptive noise levels—can lead to heightened stress and decreased productivity (Anderson, 2019). Thus, organizations must prioritize the optimization of their working conditions to foster employee satisfaction and engagement (Kumar & Singh, 2023).

Work Itself

Job Scope and Job Satisfaction

The concept of job scope encompasses several dimensions that can significantly influence employee satisfaction. Factors such as responsibility, work pace, and feedback are critical components of job scope. Inherent in this relationship is the assertion that an increase in these dimensions correlates positively with job satisfaction. Specifically, when employees experience higher levels of responsibility, a manageable work pace, and consistent constructive feedback, their overall job satisfaction tends to improve (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). This suggests that organizations prioritizing these elements are likely to cultivate a more satisfied and engaged workforce.

Variety in Work

While variety can enhance job satisfaction by preventing monotony, excessive variety can lead to confusion and stress. Research indicates that an optimal level of variety is crucial; too little variety can induce fatigue and boredom, whereas too much can overwhelm employees (Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). Therefore, striking an appropriate balance of task variety is essential for maintaining motivation and engagement without exacerbating stress levels.

Autonomy and Freedom at Work

The lack of autonomy and freedom in the workplace is another significant contributor to job dissatisfaction. When employees find themselves constrained by rigid work methods or impeded in their ability to manage their work pace, they often report lower levels of satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Empowering employees with greater autonomy not only enhances their sense of ownership but also aligns with the intrinsic motivation framework, which posits that individuals are more satisfied and productive when given freedom to navigate their work environments.

Role Clarity and Conflict

Role ambiguity and role conflict are pervasive issues that can detrimentally affect job satisfaction and employee morale. Role ambiguity arises when employees are unclear about their job responsibilities, leading to confusion and frustration (Rizzo et al., 1970). Similarly, role conflict occurs when conflicting expectations regarding an employee's role create tension and dissatisfaction. Both phenomena contribute to a monotonous and stressful work experience, ultimately diminishing employee engagement and productivity (Kahn et al., 1964). Addressing these issues through clear communication and well-defined job roles is critical for fostering a positive work environment.

Personal Factors

Age and Seniority: Research indicates that age can play a significant role in job satisfaction, albeit with varying outcomes across different demographic groups. In some cohorts, job satisfaction tends to increase with age, reflecting a deeper sense of fulfillment and alignment with personal values and career goals (Ng & Feldman, 2010). Conversely, other studies have found that older employees may experience lower job satisfaction due to factors such as age discrimination or reduced promotion opportunities (Bennett et al., 2019). Additionally, certain age groups display no significant difference in job satisfaction levels, suggesting that the relationship between age and job satisfaction is complex and influenced by numerous contextual factors (Meyer et al., 2019).

Tenure: Job tenure serves as another critical determinant of job satisfaction. Employees who have been with an organization for extended periods typically report higher levels of job satisfaction. This correlation can be attributed to the sense of job security that longer tenure provides, as it often translates into increased stability, familiarity, and

opportunities for professional development within the organization (Judge & Bono, 2001; Kahn et al., 2016). Furthermore, tenured employees may have cultivated stronger interpersonal relationships and networks within the workplace, further enhancing their overall job satisfaction.

Personality: Personality traits significantly influence job satisfaction, with attributes such as self-assurance, self-esteem, maturity, decisiveness, a sense of autonomy, and a propensity for seeking challenges and embracing responsibility playing crucial roles. Individuals who possess these traits often report higher job satisfaction, as they are more adept at navigating workplace challenges and aligning their personal goals with their job responsibilities (Judge et al., 2002). This intrinsic form of satisfaction underscores the importance of individual differences in the workplace, indicating that job satisfaction is not solely dependent on external factors, but is deeply rooted in one's personality characteristics (Wright & Cropanzano, 2000).

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This research employs a comprehensive methodological framework to investigate the intricate relationships between trade unions, employee welfare, and organizational productivity in the manufacturing sector.

Quantitative Research Design: The study predominantly adopts a quantitative research design, facilitating the systematic collection and statistical analysis of numerical data. This approach enables the identification of significant patterns and relationships related to trade union activities and industrial relations, which are essential for drawing empirical conclusions (Creswell, 2014).

Descriptive Research Methodology: To elucidate the dynamics between various trade union parameters and worker satisfaction, descriptive research methodologies are employed. This approach offers a detailed examination of the current state of employee experiences and perceptions, thus allowing for an in-depth understanding without the manipulation of variables (Trochim & Donnelly, 2006).

Correlation Analysis: The study incorporates correlation analysis to investigate the relationships among different trade union parameters and employee satisfaction levels. This statistical technique helps uncover the interdependencies between union membership attributes and job satisfaction metrics, ultimately providing insights into the potential impact of union affiliation on employee morale (Field, 2013).

Identification of Key Factors: A key objective of the research is to identify and analyze critical factors that foster a collaborative industrial relations climate. Special attention is given to the quality of labor-management relations, as these factors are instrumental in shaping employee experiences and perceptions of workplace equity (Spector, 2012).

Impact Assessment: The research further assesses the direct and indirect impacts of trade unions on job satisfaction and overall organizational productivity. Preliminary findings suggest that constructive relationships between unions and management are significantly correlated with enhanced employee satisfaction and engagement levels, thereby underscoring the strategic relevance of effective labor relations (Dunlop, 1993; Kaufman, 2008).

These methodological approaches collectively provide a robust framework for exploring the dynamics of trade unions within the manufacturing sector, elucidating their significant influence on employee welfare and organizational effectiveness.

LITERATURE GAPS

The literature gaps identified in this study regarding trade unions and their role in employee welfare and organizational productivity reveal several critical areas for further exploration:

Limited Research on Specific Industries: Current literature demonstrates a notable deficiency in comprehensive studies that focus on trade unions within specific sectors, particularly the cement industry. This gap underscores the necessity for targeted research to elucidate the unique challenges faced by trade unions in various industries and to assess their contributions to employee welfare and organizational productivity (Fosh, 2014; Turner & Lofquist, 2007).

Insufficient Empirical Evidence: Although some studies indicate a positive correlation between trade union membership and job satisfaction (Freeman & Medoff, 1984), there remains a compelling need for more empirical investigations to quantify this relationship across different contexts and industries. Robust data is essential to substantiate claims regarding the effectiveness of trade unions in enhancing worker satisfaction and to explore the mechanisms by which these unions operate (Bamber et al., 2004).

Mixed Evidence on Productivity Impact: The existing body of literature presents inconsistent findings regarding the impact of trade unions on productivity. While some researchers report a negative relationship (Doucouliagos & Laroche, 2003), others identify a positive correlation (Addison et al., 2000). This inconsistency points to the necessity for further empirical analysis to delineate the conditions under which trade unions can enhance or inhibit productivity, thereby informing best practices for organizational management (Freeman & Rogers, 2006).

Challenges Faced by Trade Unions: A comprehensive understanding of the specific challenges that trade unions confront—such as management resistance, economic constraints influencing wage negotiations, and changing labor market dynamics—is lacking in existing literature. Thoroughly investigating these obstacles is critical for developing strategies aimed at enhancing union effectiveness and ensuring better negotiation outcomes for workers (Hyman, 2001; Gall, 2009).

Generalizations About Union Effects: The literature often oversimplifies the role of trade unions, making generalized assertions without adequately accounting for the complexity and variability of their effects across different socio-economic contexts. This gap underscores the urgent need for careful empirical investigations that capture the nuanced

relationships between unions and various workplace outcomes, thereby providing a more granular understanding of their impact (Katz & Kochan, 2000; Traxler, 2003).

Addressing these gaps will not only deepen the understanding of the role of trade unions within a range of socio-economic contexts but will also illuminate their complex impact on labor markets and employee welfare, ultimately contributing to the development of more effective labor relations strategies.

RESULTS

The findings of this study contribute to the understanding of trade unions' role in shaping employee welfare and organizational productivity, revealing several critical insights:

Union Membership and Wage Premium: The analysis demonstrates that union members consistently earn higher wages than their non-union counterparts. Notably, this wage premium is particularly pronounced within Southern firms in Vietnam, suggesting that trade unions are effective advocates for higher pay. This reinforces prior literature (e.g., Freeman & Medoff, 1984), which posits that unions are essential in negotiating improved remuneration for workers.

Positive Impact on Job Satisfaction: The findings reveal a strong positive correlation between trade union membership and job satisfaction. Specifically, when trade unions provide essential services, such as legal assistance and educational opportunities, they foster an environment that significantly enhances worker satisfaction. This aligns with earlier research by Hirsch and Albert (2010), which underscores the role of unions in improving overall employee morale and workplace happiness.

Mixed Effects on Productivity: The impact of trade unions on productivity is characterized by mixed outcomes. In contexts such as the United States, workplaces that implement high-performance work systems and recognize unions typically report higher labor productivity (e.g., Godard, 2004). In contrast, previous studies in the UK highlighted negative associations between unionization and productivity (e.g., Metcalf, 2003). However, the prevailing perception of unions' effect on productivity is increasingly nuanced, suggesting that context plays a critical role in determining these outcomes.

Dual Nature of Union Effects: The study concludes that trade unions exert a dual influence on organizational outcomes, capable of both enhancing and undermining productivity and financial performance. This complexity necessitates further empirical investigation to delineate the specific conditions under which unions function optimally, reinforcing the arguments made by Ponza et al. (2021), which advocate for a context-dependent approach to analyzing union effects.

Challenges Faced by Trade Unions: The research also highlights several challenges that trade unions confront, including management resistance and economic constraints that complicate wage negotiations. These barriers can impede the effectiveness of unions in advocating for improved working conditions and increased wages, echoing the concerns raised by Kahancova et al. (2015) regarding the threats to union effectiveness in the face of evolving labor markets.

In conclusion, trade unions play a crucial role in raising employee wages and job satisfaction, but their impact on productivity is nuanced and heavily influenced by external circumstances. These dynamics should be further investigated in future studies, looking at the circumstances in which unions can best support organizational success and worker welfare.

CONCLUSIONS

This study offers a comprehensive analysis of the significant impact trade unions have on employee welfare and organizational productivity. The conclusions drawn are as follows:

Significant Role of Trade Unions: The evidence suggests that trade unions serve as vital advocates for their members, striving to improve wages, benefits, and working conditions. This advocacy translates into enhanced employee welfare, which consequently boosts job satisfaction and overall workplace morale (Gordon, 2017; Drago & Wooden, 2018).

Complex Relationship with Productivity: The relationship between trade unions and productivity is inherently complex and remarkably context-dependent. In certain scenarios, unions may facilitate increased productivity through fostering a cooperative environment and participation in decision-making processes. Conversely, in other contexts, union-imposed restrictions, such as work rules or seniority-based promotions, can hinder organizational efficiency (Freeman & Medoff, 1984; Addison, 2009). This duality underscores the necessity for a nuanced understanding of the operational dynamics of unions across various industrial settings.

Need for Context-Specific Research: The study underscores the pressing need for further empirical research that is tailored to specific industries and geographic regions. This would provide insights into the unique challenges and contributions of trade unions in diverse contexts, particularly in under-explored sectors like cement manufacturing and other emerging industries (Brewster et al., 2020; Miskell, 2019). Addressing these gaps can enhance the theoretical and practical understanding of unions' roles.

Importance of Membership Services: The findings indicate that the availability and quality of membership services offered by trade unions are pivotal in determining worker satisfaction. Services such as legal support and professional development opportunities have been correlated with increased job satisfaction among union members (Rosen & Tilly, 2020). This highlights the importance of effective service delivery in enhancing membership value and engagement.

Challenges and Future Directions: The study identifies several challenges facing trade unions, including management resistance and the economic pressures that undermine their bargaining power. Addressing these challenges is imperative for unions to fulfill their role in advocating for workers' rights and securing improved workplace outcomes (Waddington

& Whitston, 2020). Future research should explore innovative strategies unions can adopt to navigate these challenges and enhance their efficacy in a changing labor landscape.

In summary, while trade unions are instrumental in promoting employee welfare and negotiating improved working conditions, their impact on productivity is multifaceted and warrants further investigation. A deeper exploration into the conditions under which unions thrive will provide valuable insights for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers alike.

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