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ORGANIZING CHALLENGES FACED BY TRADE UNIONS IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY OF ZIMBABWE

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Abstract

Globally there are a lot of developments and changes happening in the tourism industry affecting the traditional business operations and with a serious effect on employment relations patterns. Trade unions have been at the receiving end owing to these changes. New forms of employment coupled with other changes have adversely affected the ability of trade unions to effectively organize. While union strength is measured by a number of aspects, membership remains the main indicator of union power. In this article, we examine the organizing challenges faced by the Trade Unions in the Hospitality Industry of Zimbabwe. We employ a qualitative study utilizing a sample of 80 respondents drawn from union officials (10), shop stewards (40) and management representatives (30). The study reveals that the unions face a myriad of challenges ranging from lack of resources to effectively organize and support all initiatives in place, political persecution affecting member perceptions, lack of management support, destroying all union efforts as well as changing demographics and employment conditions among other challenges. We maintain that the survival of a trade union depends primarily on its ability to organize workers. We advance the argument that the industry is not immune to the developments and changes happening in the contemporary world of work and for unions to survive they have to co-evolve. We conclude that the identified challenges can actually be opportunities for the trade unions.

Keywords: Organizing Challenges, Trade Unions, Hospitality Industry, Zimbabwe

1. Introduction

Conventional wisdom points out to the decline of trade union movements around the world. Whichever indicator one examines, the story remains the same. While trade union power is measured by a number of variables, union density remains one of the most reliable measures, placing the ability of the union to organize at the epi-center of the union viability.

Trade unionism is a phenomenon which has had a huge impact on the working lives of millions of persons across the world (Debono, 2017). This makes union existence crucial. It is not a secret that globally, trade unions continue to face serious challenges threatening their existence. From the beginning, union growth was fought by industrialists through intimidation and harassment of organizers, and the use of violence against them (Lott, 2014).

Seized with these challenges, the call for trade union renewal has been deafening in contemporary research forcing union leaders to rethink strategies to ensure trade unions survive (Hyman *et al.* 2014). Several researches undertaken globally have placed the need to rethink organizing strategies at the heart of unionism. Strikingly, member attitude and perception is identified as important in complementing organizing efforts (Frangi and Hennebert, 2015). Debono (2017) in support argues that, perceptions and feelings relating to trade unions, whether or not they are supported by facts, result in actions and tangible consequences for trade unions. Debono (2017) contends that attitudes towards unions are important to the extent to which they predict member behavior.

The ability of the union to organize depends primarily on its ability to create a positive perception in the eyes of people. Negative union attitudes worsen the union situation. Against this background, the paper demystifies the organizing challenges faced by unions in the hospitality industry of Zimbabwe. Major findings reveal that the main challenges affecting the ability of the union to effectively organize included the current economic situation in the country, of resources to effectively mobilize, employer negative attitudes and tactics, casualization of labor and lack of proper education of both potential non unionized and unionized workers.

While a number of studies have been undertaken on trade unions in Zimbabwe there exists scant literature on the unions within the hospitality industry, hence making the study crucial. We argue that trade unions are useful and relevant as they fight for bread and butter issues on behalf of their members. We argue that unions are crucial to both workers and management as they are a key stakeholder in ensuring that employees remain motivated and engaged for them to unleash good service quality and delivery. Findings to this study build on the already existing literature, while exposing the gap that needs further research despite enriching both unions and management with knowledge on how to maintain harmonious industrial relations and harness productivity.

The paper contains seven sections. The first section covers the introduction, while the second section focuses on the challenges faced by trade unions in the hospitality industry. The third section looks at the nature of the hospitality industry, while the fourth section covers the methodology used to gather data. The fifth section contains major findings and discussions, followed by section six which contains an overall discussion and subsequently conclusion. The last section contains recommendations.

2. Challenges faced by trade unions

Globally, trade unions face serious challenges which threaten their existence. From the beginning, union growth was fought by industrialists through intimidation and harassment of organizers, and the use of violence (Lott, 2014). Lott (2014), Monbiot (2016), Gupta (2016) among other scholars rightly captures an array of challenges facing trade unions. Because of these challenges, the call for trade union vitalization has been deafening in contemporary research forcing union leaders to rethink strategies to ensure trade unions survive.

Over the years, trade unions have been facing serious challenges impacting adversely on their numbers. Bergene and Mamelund (2017) point out that falling union density has been widely documented in most countries in recent decades. Despite differences at the levels of union density, generally, all unions have been facing this challenge across the globe. The following section documents in detail challenges unions are facing.

2.1. Adoption of neo-liberal policies and globalization

The adoption of neo-liberal policies fostered by globalization has created a headache for most trade unions. In African countries which are undergoing democratic transitions, unions have

faced serious challenges in the post-transition era on account of neo-liberal economic reforms that continue to affect institutional capacities (Kareth, 2018; Lee and Hidayat, 2018). The era of neo-liberalism has created tremendous challenges for workers throughout the world (Vachon *et al.* 2016; Ngoc, 2018). The same changes have seen trade unions suffer. Neo-liberalism entails a degree of institutionalization that shields economic policymaking from democratic pressures (Vachon *et al.* 2016; Monbiot, 2016). In essence, neo-liberalism sees competition as the defining characteristic of human relations.

Neo-liberalism defines individuals as consumers, whose democratic choices are best exercised by buying and selling, a process that rewards merit and punishes inefficiency (Monbiot, 2016). Thus, from this angle, organization of labor and collective bargaining by trade unions are portrayed as market distortions that impede formation of a natural hierarchy of winners and losers, prompting management to act against trade unions (Monbiot, 2016). This is supported by Evans *et al.* (2007) who point out that the neoliberal era has undermined workers' rights and labor's power, but also influenced labor to carry out a self-introspection. Klindt (2017) pointed out that globalization and liberalization affect traditional sectors of the economy such as manufacturing, construction and transportation where the outsourcing of jobs and labor migration are widespread.

A thorough analysis of this reveals that, traditionally, labor used to be organized in these sectors. Thus, for Klindt (2017), the socio-economic transformations of globalization have hollowed out core workforces in manufacturing industries – the traditional main pool for recruiting union members. This has been replaced by the growing service sector where labor has been spotted struggling to mobilize new members (Durazzi *et al.* 2018). Hence, globalization has been number one enemy of trade unions in reducing union density thereby affecting the functions of unions.

2.2. Changing demographics

Demographic changes present another headache facing trade unions (Gupta, 2016). Technological changes which have witnessed digital innovation like automation have also brought about demographic changes. The coming of the young stalk of employees who are naturally perceived as anti-union has further worsened trade union woes. Studies by Kollmeyer (2013); Cha and Yon (2018) point out those younger workers are considerably less likely to join trade unions than their older counterparts. Unlike the yester years, of late there has been an upsurge in female labor participation.

Female workers, studies have shown, are less likely to be unionized than their male counterparts (Kollmeyer, 2013; Jeremy, 2015). Kirton (2017) came up with an interesting observation that despite women's increasing share of union membership; their rates of formal participation (e.g. conference attendance, committee roles, officer positions) from branch to national level typically remain lower than men's. This observation is crucial as it recognizes that while women are viewed negatively. Berry and Mcdaniels (2018) also revealed that the perception of young workers on trade unions is different from the older generation.

Berry and Mcdaniels (2018) went on to suggest that the growing flexibilization, through what they termed the '*gig economy*' and rapidly advancing automation, is a clear indication that the world of work is changing, and as such a new generation of workers will be subject to labor market conditions unlike what past generations have experienced. Thus, from this stand point, a combination of changing technology and young preferences hamper development and growth of trade unions.

2.3. Democracy and leadership

One of the immediate challenges threatening trade unions is internal democracy. Bigger (2013) points out that for trade unions to advance interests of their members and their class, they must at an organizational level understand what their members want. Thus, the existence of democratic structure plays an important role in gathering the views of members, gaining a mandate from them and advancing their interests. What destroys unions is when members feel

leadership no-longer holds democratic principles. This affects member attitude to the trade union, such negative attitude reduces their level of commitment to unions. Bigger (2013) points out that this, in most cases, happens when growing trade unions hark back to previous glories to gain membership.

The result is that they become inert as well as sluggish and can start to resemble the very things they claim to oppose. DiSalvo (2014) carried a study on union democracy and internal politics of labor unions and their implications in the United States of America. The study revealed that union leaders often go unchallenged for long periods, sometimes anointing chosen successors instead of fostering genuine contests. Secondly, unionists even take up political positions at the expense of union mandates. The study further notes that very few members vote in standard union leadership elections and also that those who vote are not representative of membership as a whole. All these point out to leadership and democratic challenges that may be devil unions resulting in members becoming a bit skeptical to join and commit to unions.

2.4. Management attitude

The success of any trade union depends on the relationship between the union and management. In situations where management decides not to recognize or work with trade unions they throw spanners creating a serious challenge for trade unions. Durazzi *et al.* (2018) support this by suggesting that, traditionally, literature on the political economy of industrialized democracies, perceived trade unions, together with social-democratic parties, as the natural interest representation of the entire working class which challenged the predominance of business in capitalist societies. However, most managers in organizations no longer see the benefits of trade unions; instead they view them as a constraint to the framing of working conditions thus hampering decision-making.

In the same vein, some researchers see organized labor being challenged by new management policies in the form of human resource management (Waddington, 2014; Durazzi *et al.* 2018). Human Resource Management (HRM) policies are designed to promote employee commitment through direct communication between managers and employees in the process eliminating trade unions. Against this background, HRM appears to have replaced workplace representation and to a large extent substituting trade unions. Waddington (2014) points out a shift from the traditional collectivism to individualism, thus throwing trade unions under the bus.

From this angle, management has become a strong threat to trade union existence. Their continued support of HRM stifles the union ability to mobilize and be functional in carrying out its mandate. Waddington (2014) further consider the decline in union density not as a consequence of active and aggressive acts of de-recognition, but as a process of 'withering on the vine'.

2.5. Politicization of unions and legislation

Trade unions, like any other institution, do not always operate in isolation. They influence and also get influenced by the environment in which they exist. As a form of social movement, they engage in politics of the day. Erne and Blaser (2018) purport that traditionally, trade unions exerted political influence using their strong ties to labor-friendly parties a position to change with the introduction of austerity and different pieces of legislation.

It is, however, an undeniable fact that the trade union movement faces a serious challenge of politicization as well as legislation by the governments (Ceron and Negri, 2018; Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman, 2013; Erne and Blaser, 2018). This has threatened their power and hegemony hence affecting their effectiveness and the general member commitment.

2.6. Financial weakness

One of the most common challenges of trade unions globally is lack of financial resources to effectively mobilize. The power of trade unions is mediated by institutional and economic

contexts and is derived from various resources that unions can deploy to advance their interests (Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman, 2013). Trade unions wield associational power, which, according to Adascalitei and Muntean (2018), involves organizing workers as a collective lot using resources and capabilities developed by trade unions in order to recruit and represent workers. Adascalitei and Muntean (2018) further explain that this serves as a signaling mechanism that can increase credibility of industrial actions.

Apart from associational power, trade unions have organizational power, which denotes the capacity of trade unions to cultivate their social capital and create a sense of unity among the rank and file (Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman, 2013). The use of organizational power involves high costs for trade unions because it requires coordination and mobilization of membership and can backfire in cases when mobilization fails to bring desired outcomes (Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman, 2013). Thus, failure to have financial muscles makes it hard for unions to mobilize effectively as financial resources are needed. Most unions rely on union subscriptions yet with dwindling numbers that position is compromised. Lack of financial resources eventually affects the level of performance of workers who disconnect with the organization (Rotea *et al.* 2018). Even shop stewards who are not fulltime union employees need some form of reward for them to effectively apply themselves.

3. Nature of the hospitality industry of Zimbabwe

In the 1990s, the hospitality sector of Zimbabwe, was one of the fastest growing sectors but suffered significantly due to a series of economic challenges as well as political problems (Moyo, 2015; Sai *et al.* 2015). The hospitality industry has been facing serious challenges ever since which resulted in the cutting down on costs; with labor costs at the forefront (Macheka, 2018). Given that the sector is female dominant, the unions have been hit hard as studies have shown that women generally are reluctant to participate in trade union programs (Mwando *et al.* 2016).

Ncube (2017) notes that the major drivers of such economic slowdown has been liquidity challenges, lack and high cost of capital, revenue underperformance, outdated technologies, infrastructure deficits, power shortages and a fragile global financial environment. From a background of such decline, occupancies and decline in revenues, most hotels have been faced with an increasing need to cut down on costs of which staff overheads are one of the major costs, hence an indicator to the need to play around with numbers which eat directly into the union figures in terms of density.

Ncube (2017) explains that, faced with such tough times, jobs are also not spared, vacant positions can be frozen and some jobs are eliminated totally, operations are closed and some functions are outsourced. All this is made in an attempt to enhance the short-term cost efficiencies of the business but eating hard into trade unions. Information from one of Zimbabwe's largest trade union (ZCTU) revealed that the level of retrenchment in organizations has been increasing with 450 workers being retrenched weekly.

At its peak in 1990s, the Zimbabwe Catering and Hotel Workers Union (ZCHWU) had an excess of 24,000 members (Chibatwa, 2018). Owing to massive challenges that affected the hospitality industry in general, the trade union was grossly affected due to loss of employment by its members. Most employers in the industry resorted to adopting precarious employment strategies thus engaged contract workers, casual employees, part timers and students who are naturally reluctant to join unions (Ncube, 2017; Macheka, 2018). Interesting enough is the twist of events between 2013 to date, where the industry has been tipped to be the fastest growing industry employing the majority. Unlike the yester years where such a boom was associated with a boom in trade union numbers, unions have been lamenting over the shrinking numbers hence raising a lot of questions. Against this background, the research seeks to establish the organizing challenges faced by the unions as well as determine the strategies in place to counter such.

4. Methodological approach and research design

Crossman (2019) submits that qualitative research is a type of social science research that deals with non-numerical data and that seeks to interpret meaning from the data attempting to understand social life through the study of targeted populations or places. Qualitative research is viewed as exploratory research, aimed at understanding and explaining a particular situation or phenomena (Streefkerk, 2019). In nature, qualitative research is inductive, as it starts with an observation then develops into a theory.

We adopted a single case study approach (of the hospitality industry), with embedded units (three groups of hotels). The case study method “explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information... and reports a case description and case themes.” (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). To gather data, we utilized purposive sampling. Purposive sampling technique, commonly known also as judgment sampling, can be viewed as the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses (Etikan *et al.* 2017).

We identified 80 responds. Of these 80 respondent, 10 were full time union official employed by the Zimbabwe Catering Workers Union (ZCHWU) the other 40 were Shop Stewards seconded by the union, working for the union but employed within the 3 major hotel groups in Zimbabwe contributing more than 80% of their membership (Rainbow Towers Group; Cresta Group of Hotels and the African Sun Hotels). The remaining 30 were managers from the 3 identified Hotel Groups.

The majority of the members were part of the National Employment Council (NEC) for the Catering and Hotel Industry, as depicted by Table 1:

Table 1. Response rate				
Category	Population	Targeted Sample	Actual	%
Full time Union Officials	15	15	10	67%
Shop Stewards	60	50	40	80%
Management Representatives	60	40	30	75%
Total	135	105	80	76%

Source: Authors own preparation

As shown in Table 1, the research initially targeted 105 respondents but managed to gather data from 80 respondents representing 76%. Given that the researchers adopted a qualitative study, the sample becomes sufficient enough to generalize the findings. Interviews which lasted 40 minutes as well as focus group discussions were undertaken by the researchers. Data was collected between August 2019 and December 2019. Data was analyzed through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is, at its core, a method for identifying and describing patterns in qualitative data (Trahan and Steward, 2013).

The main aim of a thematic analysis is to identify themes, i.e. patterns in the data that are important or interesting. These are then used as themes to address the research or say something about an issue (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). Data was tested using framework analysis, which involves familiarization, identifying a thematic framework, coding, charting, mapping and interpretation (Gale *et al.* 2013).

5. Findings and discussion

Trade union officials, shop stewards and management representatives who participated in the study identified the following as the major challenges affecting the organizing capacity of the union.

5.1. Economic challenges

The trajectory the country is taking economically presents a serious challenge for trade unions. The ZCHWU top officials revealed the economic meltdown and great recession in Zimbabwe has brought an excruciating predicament their union operations. The same position was pointed out by managerial representatives, given their interaction with the trade union in Collective Bargaining (CB) processes under the National Employment Council (NEC). The union officials pointed out that inflation has affected unions' ability to negotiate with the employer and life generally in Zimbabwe has been bad particularly for employees in the industry. One official pointed out that as a union, the economic situation has affected us and members feel that we are not doing enough to safe guard their interest. Negotiations at National Employment Council level take time and what we propose and at times get are two different things. This has affected the perception our members have on us giving them a negative attitude towards the union.

The power of a union is measured by its ability to negotiate in good faith with management. If each time the union negotiates and fails, member confidence in the union leadership as well as the CB process becomes compromised. This case makes the union look like a zombie structure with no power and discourages member participation in the union business. With a weak bargaining power, management enjoys monopoly and at times makes union leadership appear like buffoons with nothing to offer yet feasting on member subscriptions. In such scenarios, unilateral decisions are taken by management and the union in most cases will seize to have a say. The case in point was pointed out by a union official who submitted that;

"....the realization by employers in different hotels on the economic challenges being faced mainly the presence of a hyper inflationary environment has induced most hotels to offer a 'hardship' allowance, given at the employer's discretion, not even regulated within the labor laws of Zimbabwe and negotiated by the union. While such a move by the employer is noble, it has slapped unions on the face as they can only argue through the work's council platform in the process of collective bargaining, leaving them with no say.... "

Further discussions with management, shop stewards and union officials revealed that hotel groups like the Cresta Group and African Sun Group introduced the Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) without consulting labor representatives in an attempt to address the harsh economic reality. Union executives pointed out that this situation distorted the traditional practice of negotiation, a situation that exposed the weak bargaining power of unions, hence, giving workers a somewhat negative attitude towards the unions. From the union leadership, these disparities affected their perception as some companies were offering COLA and others not. One respondent explained that;

".....what I want you to know is that the decision to join a union is a voluntary decision. How an individual preserves the union will determine their need to either join or participate in union business. This act by management guised under economic hardship expose us as a union since members will feel there is no need for being union member when the employer is that carrying..... "

Management representatives confirmed that COLA is at the discretion of the employer depending on business volumes. Union members pointed out that given this self-initiative; they have been cast in a bad light affecting their member perception on the usefulness of the union. This may, therefore, help explain why membership is dwindling on daily basis. While a lot was pointed out reality is such that the ZCHWU find it hard to negotiate on the increase of both the hardship allowance and COLA even when members approach them. This reduces confidence on the part of both current and potential members.

5.2. Lack of resources

Union official pointed out that their organizing capacity was compromised by lack of adequate resources. The primary challenge affecting ZCHWU has been over relying on once source of revenue subscriptions. Subscription as a source of revenue for the union makes sense when trade union density is on the high side. With low union density, revenue generated becomes

meaningless especially in a hyper inflationary environment when proper organizing call for the deployment of resources to support the union cause. Through the discussion with respondents from labor, the researchers got the impression that the union was admitting that while efforts were in place to engage on fund raising projects the main source of financial resources was primarily union dues. One of the executive members pointed out that,

“....we are facing a serious challenge of resources. You are aware that for us to reach out we have to empower the shop stewards, for us to have branded material for visibility it costs money, for us to carry out awareness campaigns we need resources and currently we don't have these resources.”

From the interviews conducted, it was clear that the union lacks resources to support its initiatives. Respondents explained that failure to have resources mainly, financial resources, was dragging all efforts to reach out to new members and or even consolidate old members. One shop steward explained that some employees in the sector were actually not aware of the existence of ZCHWU union and those aware of its existence, because of their failure to get direct benefit from unions, had bad perception on the union.

Respondents pointed out that ZCHWU lacked financial resources to support its members on the ground in different hotel groups. Union officials pointed out that they lacked the resources to fully educate their members, who explain why there was low commitment to participate in union business and also affected the recruitment of potential members. This lack of education was primarily affecting membership density.

We discovered that the lowly paid employee in the industry was earning RTGS 1 500 translating to USD \$55.00. Given such low income, it was hard to convince people to join the union and pay subscriptions yet feeling there is no direct benefit from the union. The union was failing from the findings to fully train and equip shop stewards whose primary role was to educate others to appreciate and understand the importance of the union hence affecting the level of union commitment. We note the significance of shop stewards which is a pointer to in the right direction as they train the Workers Committee (WC) on how to effectively represent employees in Works Councils (WCs) and Disciplinary Hearings (DH).

We observed an interesting contribution from one managerial respondent who felt unions, despite having serious issues, had a positive contribution to the business. Respondents also felt that;

“....if there is one thing management has to understand, it is the importance of the union. When the union comes and questions on Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), it is not that they are fighting the employer but serving the employer because it is a cost to the employer, the education should not only be targeted to the employees but also their management.”

5.3. Politics of the day

The relationship between trade unions and political parties in Africa is not a secret. For Zimbabwe, it is a fact that unions played a role during the nationalist movement and contributed significantly to the 1980 independence. In 1981, the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) led government influence the formation of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Union (ZCTU) to which ZCHWU is an affiliate. Politics was thus identified by both management representatives and union leadership as one of the serious problem bedeviling union's ability to effectively organize. An interesting observation from the respondents points to two direct opposites to the same challenge. One senior management pointed out that the union was deeply entrenched to national politics. The respondent explained that,

“....it is not a secret that ZCHWU is an affiliate to the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and as an affiliate has participated in all its programs, which have been strongly influenced by the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) which is the main opposition party that has been responsible for violent demonstrations (Citing the January 14 – 16 2019 mass protests organized by ZCTU nut hijacked by MDC). As employers, we feel ZCHWU now has a political agenda and has the capacity to do the same in the industry.”

The same sentiments were pointed out by the other managerial respondents who viewed ZCHWU as the extension MDC as a political party. The interviewees cited the events of massive unrests which were initially triggered by the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and supported by ZCTU leading to 1 August 2018 mass protests. During the protest, some of the youths threatened and were stopped attempting to burn the Rainbow towers where the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission was stationed announcing the 2018 Presidential elections which were disputed.

From management views, this alone has made people, including potential union members; think that the union leadership was overshadowed by the political parties hence losing member trust which equally affect member commitment and member perception. We gathered the respondents felt the union needed a good will from members. In any case, the failure to bargain and the ability to support mass protests presented a serious challenge.

Union leadership, while acknowledging the perception and general feeling that they had a political tag, their explanation was different as they pointed out that the government had abandoned the West citing the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZIDERA) which imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe in December 2001 by the United States of America (USA) and adopted the Look East Policy (LEP) thereby attracting the Chinese. Generally, the union executives explained that the Chinese as employers had a negative attitude towards unions and in most cases threatened workers who are union members to withdraw their membership or risk dismissal. They cited the case of Golden Peacock Villa Hotel which was commissioned in July 2012 where they do not even have a single member, despite several attempts by the union to reach out for these employees.

The union officials pointed out that these Chinese had a massive political muscle, despite reports of low pay, poor health and safety and cases of sexual and physical abuse. They explained that cases of this nature were dotted through the country and they could not organize in such workplaces. Another union executive explained that some employers in the industry had a political muscle. The interviewee explained that,

....some of the employers in the industry are former Service Chiefs (SC), Army Generals, Police Commissioners or Central Intelligence Officers (CIO) and they intimidate workers who in-turn are forced or made to believe that unions are very much evil.

The executive explained that, generally, members because of high levels of desperation opt to be safer than to be union members, hence, affecting adversely member recruitment efforts. The researchers through a probing question sought clarity on the union involvement with politics. One senior member from the union pointed out that;

....I wish to advise you directly that we are affiliated to ZCTU. Our operations are monitored and guided by ZCTU but as a union we are independent. At no point have we as a union declared openly that we support MDC. The behavior by ZCTU as a labor center we do not have control. In any case, we have some members in the executive who are ZANU-PF supporters. So the allegations while we are concerned are baseless apart for the fact that it has negative effects and consequences on us.

The majority of respondents acknowledged that indeed the political tag was affecting member perception and attitudes. Respondents pointed out that they were aware of the issue but played safe by targeting members from all political divides. One member was clear that the union was desperate for numbers but pointed out that there was need to balance its own needs as well as the needs of the labor center where the union was affiliated to. We also gathered through a discussion with union members that politics has taken a new twist affecting the ability of ZCHWU to effectively organize workers. One official pointed out that;

....we have seen the coming on of Hotel Allied Workers Union of Zimbabwe (HAWUZ) as a political strategy to create a rival union. We gather it is affiliated to the labor center that was created by the ruling party in 2001 the Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions.

The union officials pointed out that the rival union had no known numbers but pushing hard to be included on NEC negotiations. Such unions created distortions in the industry which affected ZCHWU.

5.4. Employer attitude

The survival of any trade union primarily depends on the level of interaction with and recognition by management. Trade union leadership observed management attitude as one of the main challenges affecting the union's ability to effectively organize in the hospitality industry. The union leadership pointed out that while they acknowledged low union membership, management was worsening their woes due to non-submission of union dues after they deduct from their members. One of the participants pointed out that:

...we feel this move by the employer is deliberate so as to weaken the union. Our CBA is clear that all deductions should be remitted to us before or on the 10th of the month. However, our challenge is that at times management forgets that they have our dues from our members.

The respondent cited cases where they had a challenge that went up to litigation with two big players in the industry. They also pointed out that management was intimidating their members and openly threatening workers' committee members who are known that they are union members. The union representatives went on to point out that management was the fore front to tarnish the image of the union. Union leadership further pointed out that management stands accused of causing divisions through sponsoring the formation of other unions and lobbying for such unions to be part of the NEC negotiations.

They also lamented cases where management would turn down all proposals in works council and NEC negotiations and then nicodimously award employees a slight raise without the involvement of the union. This makes the union look useless and creates a wrong image about the union a situation they felt management crafted and generally contributing to a wrong membership perception. Passionately, one respondent lamented that:

....my experience with unions, since this is not the first time to serve member commitment to unions does not just come. It comes when members feel the union is working to better their conditions of service. When members get the impression that they are better off without unions, they prefer to deal directly with the employer, a card the employers know how best to pull to defeat our organizing efforts as well as our quest for membership commitment.

Another interesting observation came from another respondent who pointed out that managers in other hotels have devised a well-oiled plan to defeat the efforts by unions to mobilize and this has been a challenge. They claimed that managers were responsible for inciting members that all those union executives who sat at the NEC level for industry wide negotiations award themselves hefty and lucrative packages. The member pointed out those malicious and reckless statements affected the perception they have on their leadership. Given that the idea to join union is an independent idea and it is voluntary. Neither is the impetus to participate on union business, thus, such management utterances created chaos in different hotel establishments.

5.5. Casualization of labor

Both management and union representatives pointed out that the union was affected by the adoption of new forms of employment such as the appointment of casual employees. Naturally, union executives explained that adoption of casual employment, and employees on 3 months fixed term contracts eroded the possibility of getting new members. One respondent from management pointed out that:

...we cannot employ people on permanent basis given the level of business volatility in Zimbabwe right now, we employ as and when is necessary looking at and balancing the demands of business fluctuations. The only way we can survive is through cutting costs and labor or rather employment cost remains fixed and should be managed.

The same view was echoed by other managerial respondent who pointed out that given the current economic challenge, it was hard for hotels to keep a bloated head count, but to rationalize staff and maintain a few who naturally would be called in as and when they are needed.

For trade union executives, casualization impacted on the union's ability to mobilize members, given that the casual employees have a negative perception on unions emanating

from the nature of their contracts, which are short term in nature. The union explained that such workers see no value in joining the union since they will not stay long and in one company but move around. The other union representatives pointed out that the majority of hotels have affected their union density through engaging casual employees who work for few hours or days and leave soon afterwards. The respondent explained that management while preaching unity with the union engaged in double standards through threatening casuals and all those on fixed term contracts. The respondents explained that:

....we have had cases where some managers threaten employee on fixed term contracts that if they dare join unions, their contracts would not be renewed.

Another interviewee pointed out that given how hard it is to secure employment in Zimbabwe employees oblige thereby giving a perception that unions are naturally evil.

Participants from the trade union side pointed out that of the main challenge with casual employment were distortions in the industry. Given the level of desperation, casual employees were given salaries far below the NEC stipulated rates, which equally has affected also those on legal contracts and any effort to engage the employer is useless given the availability of cheap labor, as was explained by one union official. The union leadership also pointed out that management was grossly affecting worker perception through denying employees job security. This, according to the respondents, encouraged employees to view the union leadership as a natural failure.

Another trade union respondent pointed out that hotels were also relying on students as a source of cheap labor in virtually all departments, and students were not aware of the union and neither are they recognized as workers, yet they work on fulltime jobs.

5.6. Lack of education

The other challenge pointed out by the union representatives was failure to educate all its members and potential members on the importance of joining and participating in union business. The respondents explained that the union roles at times were not 100% visible and immediate. This was confirmed by other managerial participants who pointed out that the union worked for and assisted all employees in their establishments. One of the respondents noted that:

...as a union, we negotiate things that are long term in nature and in most cases, workers appreciate such when they retire, take for instance our fight for pensions and yet pensions is something one enjoys after employment. We have had cases where we fight with the National Social Security Agency (NSSA) over underpayment or delayed payments.

Lack of basic education was affecting member recruitment and member commitment to the union. The respondents felt that the majority of employees, mainly those with atypical contracts, needed education on unionism. With such education, the respondents were sure that people would appreciate the significance of unions. We observed that ZCHWU was failing to effectively engage such workers and yet they constitute the majority of the workers in the hotel industry.

6. Conclusion

In this article, we have examined the organizing challenges affecting trade unions in the hospitality industry of Zimbabwe. Our primary focus was on ZCHWU which is the dominant union in the industry. Findings correspond well with the view that the general union decline has been damaged by restructuring and state driven hostility (Erne and Blaser, 2018). We argue that the state partly has played a serious role in undermining the trade union through failure to deal with employment issues in the Chinese run companies and those politically connected. We view this as 'willful blindness' by state. The same sentiments are echoed by a number of scholars who cite political interference as one of the challenges hitting hard on trade unions (Ackers, 2015; Ibsen and Tapia, 2017).

Erne and Blaser (2018) posit that politics remains an external threat to trade unionism undermining the union at the workplace thereby causing internal threats as members'

confidence is sapped. Faced with such massive hurdle, unions cannot effectively mobilize members. The only option will be to utilize the same muscle to fight for member rights through creating political alliances, which again if not effectively done undermine the unions.

A common view by respondents was low membership calling for the need to revitalize. The same concern was pointed out by Erne and Blaser (2018), who reiterated that declining membership is both cause and effect of weakened workplace presence, organizing campaigns. From the respondents, lack of financial resources explained the weak capacity of the union to recruit members in virtually all hotels. This same view is supported by Ackers (2015) who insists that the vicious cycle of loss of union power resource leads to greater obstacles to renewal.

The same challenge pointed out in the study exposes key challenges highlighted by Herry and Simms (2008), who are of the opinion that the success or failure of the union shows a great interplay between union strategies, resources under the union control, historical circumstances and above all, members themselves might be a barrier to union renewal. Thus, at the heart of unionism lies the issue of resources to be able to mobilize members as well as to incentivize members to actively participate in union business.

Respondents also pointed out that union avoidance is by some employers particularly those with a political muscle and mainly of Chinese origin in the case of Zimbabwe. A combination of union avoidance and employers' resistance to unions' impacts heavily on unions (Gunnigle *et al.* 2015) as witnessed from the findings. Gunnigle *et al.* (2015) went to suggest that globally; the decline of union representation can be attributed to the labor regulatory framework. This is assumed as designed to undermine employee organization and activism, as well as through management resistance to the advancement of collective bargaining and collective representation of workers by unions. From this stand point, it becomes crystal clear that management can leverage on the legislation of the day to undermine efforts by the union to effectively represent its members.

Another noted challenge was lack of management support and their sabotaging tactic on the union. This to researchers exposes the union whose existence is supported by the same managers. Instead of fighting management researchers suggest the need by the union to collaborate well with management. Collaboration with management corresponds to findings by Clibborn *et al.* (2016) in their study of the Australian automotive industry. The union, according to the study, was able to gain respect after cooperating with management and tried to save General Motors. Union revitalization strategies in most cases follow six options ranging from organizing, union structure, coalition building, partnership, political action and international networking (Benassi *et al.* 2018; Ibsen and Tapia, 2017).

From the findings, respondents across the labor divide pointed out to collaborations with ZCTU. The same sentiments are highlighted by Schmalz and Thiel (2017) say that such collaboration leads to the union attaining societal power. Societal power in principle entails the capacity of unions to create a chain of networks with other essential actors and that in itself may lead the union to participate on broader debates to legitimate the political economic issues. Ibsen and Tapia (2017) sum the argument by concluding that collaboration as a strategy, leads to partnerships resulting in power also being derived from employers by the union. Schmalz and Thiel (2017) argue that involvement of unions with national leadership remains essential to unions in harnessing power.

Members also join unions because they perceive they benefit from such an endeavor. Union instrumentality represents the member's perception of the union's ability to improve workers' welfare with regard to both the traditional (e.g. wages) and non-traditional (e.g., job satisfaction) conditions of work (Schmalz *et al.* 2018). We conclude that the identified challenges are real in Zimbabwe. For the survival of ZCHWU, more still can be done in ensuring that members see value in joining the union, view leadership is democratic, correct and necessary. With effective strategies in place, the challenges identified can be converted into opportunities for trade union mass mobilization.

7. Recommendations

The paper recommends that the union can solve some its challenges through engaging in a genuine social dialogue with employers in different hotels as well as government through the ministry of labor as a way to prove that the union is not anachronistic but developmental. Such efforts may lead to effective union-management collaboration, than facing management head-on. The union can engage in improving its image through positive act primarily to their immediate stakeholder. To extend its influence, the union can also partner with other social movement groups. It is a fact that the mandate of a trade union is to its members who are equally part and parcel of the society.

The paper also recommends that the union engage in fund raising programs for it not to rely on subscriptions, as a way to finance its activities and programs on the ground. The union can also engage in advertising through targeting students while they are still in school for instance those doing hotel and catering. These will know the union's existence and understand the union benefits. We also recommend that the union while remaining subservient to the labor center always remain focused and principled in managing their mandate to their members through effectively bargaining with the employers.

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