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Evaluating the Role and Impact of Tanzanian Trade Unions on Worker's Welfare from 2016 to 2021

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ABSTRACT

This study appraised the role of the trade unions during the five years of the fifth phase regime in Tanzania in addressing employee's concerns. The main aim was to assess the views of trade union members on how they view functioning of their unions basing on four dimensions namely structure, value, impact and environment with their indicators. The parameters focused on the common areas that influence functions of trade unions and are vividly assessable. The methodology involved online survey using Google form which was sent to members of trade unions through social media networks. The data collection technique used was unrestricted survey. The findings reveal that majority of respondents are positive on the existence of trade unions in work places but factors like political environment and legal framework are not friendly to smooth running of trade unions. Further, soft skills tactic is found to be more appropriate in solving employee's grievances compared to hard skills. It is concluded by this study that despite the challenges experienced, unionism is still an important instrument for workers wellbeing in their work places. In addition to that, the spirit of trade unionism never dies, hence the trade unions and employees must learn to coexist in a mutual benefit as guided by industrial relation concept. This study recommends that the concept of industrial relations (labor relations) be enhanced in work places through different approaches like training and capacity building to trade union leaders, members and the management of the institutions (establishment of training programs). Additionally, the study about the future of trade unions in the fast-changing world in all aspects is demanding.

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1. Introduction

Historically, the development of the trade unions can be traced back to industrial revolution in Europe during the second half of 19th century when workers started to seek security of their jobs through collective bargaining agreements. The establishment of trade unions is legally accepted at both national and international levels. Internationally, the ILO convention No 87 of 1948 emphasizes the right to Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize. At the national level, the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania provides for freedom of association while the Employment and Labour Relations Act No 6 of 2004 allows both the workers and employers to establish and join unions. Upon establishment of the trade union, the members are free to elect their representatives and formulate their work program basing on their constitutions but within the frameworks of the national constitution and other laws. The primary objectives of establishing trade unions in work places are to defend and pursue the rights of employees particularly its members (Bashir & Akhtar, 2022). Among the key issues which trade unions would wish to achieve are bargaining wage

and salaries, protecting workers subjected to disciplinary acts, fight to improve working conditions, improve work conditions through bargaining (negotiations), strive to achieve employee-employer relations and safeguarding the interests of the organization. Citing the examples of teachers, Ochieng'Tom, Achieng'Ursula, and Daisy (2022) insist that trade unions are instrumental organs for workers welfare and benefits. Adu-Amankwah (2022) reveals that trade unions in Africa emerged in response to the struggle for decolonization process. He however notes that after independence, the trade unions lost their power to the ruling class as many of them became appendages of the state, tightly incorporated into the apparatus of the single-party regimes that ruled African countries shortly after independence. He adds that, during the end of 1980s, the trade union activism re-emerged in response to economic crises as well as the main elements of struggle for democracy demanding for the end of one-party dictatorship and military rule. This trend has shown that trade unions have always been vital instruments to advocate for changes in all sectors of life in an attempt to create better working conditions in work places.

Studies, show that, there are varied views about the functioning of trade unions in Tanzania. Johnston and Land-Kazlauskas (2018) argue that trade unions usually participate in lobbying activities to influence legislation and public policy, championing initiatives such as minimum wage laws, workplace safety regulations, and protection against discrimination in an attempt to create friendlier working environment. Visser (2019) highlights that attitude towards unionization vary between unionized and non-unionized workers. While unionized workers typically perceive trade unions as important instruments to improve general wellbeing, those non-unionized may view unions as unnecessary or even detrimental, while others may desire the protection and benefits that come with union membership but face barriers to organizing. In addition to that, attitudes towards trade unions can also vary across industries and sectors. Workers in industries with a history of harsh working environment may be more inclined to support union representation unlike those workers in industries with relatively favorable employment conditions who may have less urgency to join unions, perceiving their individual bargaining power as sufficient (Rahman, 2023). Babeiya (2011) is of the strong view that trade unions in Tanzania are taking passive role despite the existence of various problems such as poor working conditions, low wages/salaries and policies that are unfriendly to workers. According to him, the passive role of trade unions may be caused by several factors like poor leadership of the unions, weak internal democracies of unions, mismanagement of union funds leading to conflicts and selfishness among others. He further argues that unions were more active and useful during colonial times when the legal framework environment was stiff unlike today's passive unions under a user-friendly legal framework. Mboma and Yamlinga (2019) advance another view that besides existence of trade unions, workers are still complaining due to different problems in their working places. According to them, underperformance of trade unions is the main factor leading to unaddressed worker's grievances at work places. In addition to these, Nchimbi (2018) found that unions are poor in sharing information to their members leading to negative perception and passiveness of the unions in general. All these are indicators that trade unions in Tanzania need to reorganize themselves in a manner that they are able to represent workers actively. Talib and Mohammed (2016) raise an important point to be considered in an endeavor to understand more about trade unions as quoted hereunder;

Trade unions are the oldest bodies in the history of the world of work. But its activities have been taken lightly even by the staff themselves. In addition, issues of trade unions especially in the East African region have unfortunately not been well documented and researched enough to be known to all. For these reasons, the authors of this book have tried to show the way to others to continue where they left off (loosely translated from Kiswahili)

Following the just cited quotation, it may be argued that broad understanding of trade unionism is still not promising. That is why according to the Danish labour market profile 2021/2022 trade unions in Tanzania mainland constitute only nineteen percent (19%) of the total working population. That being the case, functioning of the trade unions cannot be looked at in a static view. The trend of the establishment of trade unions clearly indicate that efficiency and effectiveness of trade unions depend on specific time frame influenced mainly by political environment. Due to the dynamic nature of time, it was thought imperative to ascertain how trade unions are faring in recent years. It is against this backdrop whereby this study is conducted to evaluate the role of trade unions in Tanzania from the year 2016 to

2021. Prior to methodology and the results of this study, the political environment of both Africa and Tanzania are critically analyzed in the subsequent subsections. The question which guided this study was; how do trade union members perceive the role of trade unions based on the four parameters of structure, impact, value and environment?

1.1. Political Environment in Africa

According to Rugeiyamu, Kashonda, and Mohamed (2018), political environment in any given country defines the overall backdrop and establishes important parameters for trade unions activities. This means that efficiency of trade unions depends largely on the type of political environment of the day. Generally, most trade unions in Africa share the same historical backgrounds during and after colonization. Several studies acknowledge the important role played by the trade unions in the struggle for independence of African states. They further acknowledge that these trade unions faced various challenges of defending interests of their members even after independence (McQuinn, 2020; Nchimbi, 2018; Schminke & Fridell, 2021). Before independence, trade unions were useful engines for the liberation of their respective countries. After independence, most trade unions transformed themselves into ruling parties. This means that, some trade unions were diffused into ruling class hence new ones were established. Since the trade unions in Africa share almost the same history, they also share almost common political environment of functioning up to now. Just like other trade unions in the world, in Africa, there are common features which characterize the trade unions. The features are; registration, confederations/federations (central bodies) and tripartite system. What differentiate trade unions from one country to another is the type of political system in respective countries. However, even in the respective countries, there is no uniformity in terms of features due to changes of regime from time to time or change of political systems from time to time. For example, trade unionism in Uganda went through four stages; during colonialism, soon after independence, during Idd Amin's regime and post Idd Amin's regime to present, each stage having its own unique political influences on the operation of trade unions (Schminke & Fridell, 2021; Scott, 1966).

Kalusopa, Otoo, and Shindondola-Mote (2012) argue that during independence struggle, trade unions across the continent offered the most important platform for ordinary people to voice their frustrations and to demand for self-determination. They add that, for post-political independence, trade unions in the continent have been at the forefront of the struggle for good governance, democracy, equality, fairness, respect for humans and workers' rights and social and economic justice (Ahmed, Azhar, & Mohammad; Dler M Ahmed, Z Azhar, & Aram J Mohammad, 2024; Dler Mousa Ahmed, Zubir Azhar, & Aram Jawhar Mohammad, 2024). In addition to that, the authors identify three main phases of political environments and operation of trade unionism in Africa. The first phase is during colonialism whereby trade unions were established for decolonization purposes among other objectives of decent work for workers. The second phase is between 1960 and 1980 whereby most countries of Africa ratified ILO conventions relating to trade unions hence the trade unions flourished at this time. The third phase is from 1980s to date whereby the political class switched the alliance to capita. It is at this phase where trade unions experienced tough conditions due to the rapid informalization and casualization of work. This is therefore a clear indication that, functioning of trade unions in Africa depends largely on the type of political environment existing at a particular time.

1.2. Political Environment of Trade Unions in Tanzania

As the case in Africa, political environment in Tanzania largely affects the functioning and operations of trade unions. Although Tanzania has been under the rule of the same party Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM) since independence, political environment was unique for each regime hence different tone of trade unions. The first regime under Mwalimu Nyerere was characterized by strict control and one-party system hence little space for trade unions. The second phase of the government under President Ali Hassan Mwinyi reversed ujamaa policies as well as encouraging private enterprise. This also affected the operation of trade unions positively. The third and fourth regimes under Presidents Benjamin Mkapa and Jakaya Kikwete respectively revolutionized the political environment which ultimately affected trade unions positively. It was only during the fifth regime under President John Magufuli when strict control was reintroduced in all sectors including trade unionism. This paper describes the political environment of Tanzania from 2015 onwards and how it affected the functioning

of the trade unions. According to Shivji (2021), Tanzania experienced the Bonapartist situation during the fifth phase regime (end of 2015 to the early 2021). Bonapartism is explained by him as unexpected rise of an individual above classes and social struggles. Additionally, he argues that unlike many African countries, Tanzania experienced Messianic Bonapartism which is characterized by ruling through fiat of the leader using material measures in the interests of the poor (the down trodden – wanyonge) as well as metaphysical appeals. James and Kashumba (2021) share the views with Shivji by describing the fifth phase regime in terms of servant leadership (divine concept) in which the president was committed to service and sacrifice of his personal interests for the well-being of the people popularly known as the 'wanyonge'. Although the regime was very applauded for positive changes like cracking down corruption and curbing government spending among many, different studies characterized it as the era of backsliding democracy, authoritarian populism and climate of fear (Haule, 2021; Paget, 2021).

Due to Bonaparte regime, there were no any class or social struggles which had enough confidence to influence changes in favor of workers. According to Haule (2021), the slogan by the 5th phase government was "Work," hence, all other matters considered by the fifth government to stall development efforts and reduce poverty, including democracy, were disregarded. Just like other associations, five years of the fifth phase Tanzanian government was tough for trade unions because most of the worker's rights were not honored. Komba (2019) put more emphasize that public officials used to abuse their power and treat others unfairly in order to appear more powerful as well as disregard the rule of law and embrace authoritarianism. The management of the institutions became more repressive to workers (verbal harassments were rampant, threats became the order of the day, untimely and cruel transfers massively experienced). According to the Danish Trade Union Development Agency 2021/2022 report, the worker's rights in Tanzania deteriorated tremendously as presented in the quotation below;

Tanzania has experienced some downturns in trade union rights violations during the 2010s. On the Global Rights Index, the country ranked at 3 out of 5+ (5+ is worst) from 2014 to 2016, but it dropped to 4 out of 5+ since 2017. The latter ranking is listed as "systematic violations of rights": the government and/or companies are engaged in serious efforts to crush workers' collective voice, putting fundamental rights under threat (Pg 24).

All these were experienced in the presence of trade unions (leaders and members). Different people are expressing huge dissatisfaction towards trade unions on the social media platforms. Some people have dared to label Trade Unions that they are now *"Trade Onions"* meaning that they are no longer useful as they used to be. This situation requires a study to reveal in a more scientific perspective how trade unions are playing their role in serving members, institutions and the country.

1.3. Theoretical framework

This study is framed on the political exchange perspective which was introduced in the social sciences at the end of the 1970s by Alessandro Pizzorno. This concept has traditionally been used to explain the relationship between trade unions and the government whereby each party has something to offer in exchange with the other. The government usually offers materials (salary and other fringe benefits) in exchange with consensus from the unions which have ability to endanger social order. However, some scholars as summarized by de Guzmán, Roca, and Diaz-Parra (2016) have introduced new way of looking at the relationship especially during the time of crises. They argue that, during the time of crises, trade unions' strategic behavior is affected by the dual roles they play; as social partners and as organizers of discontent. In addition to that, the scholars further argue that since trade unions are not the only representatives of member's interests and due to limitation of the union's autonomy during the exchange, tension is usually generated between the union officials and rank-and-file (members). In general view, political exchange perspective is built on the social exchange theory which deals with social interaction based on costs and rewards or in more precise term reciprocity (Cook, Cheshire, Rice, & Nakagawa, 2013; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In the context of trade unions, the reciprocity can be explained in two ways; between leaders and members and between the union and the government. Trade union members usually join the union with expectations of gaining benefits (protection of their general welfare and

employment rights). Since the members consent to contribute certain amount of money through deductions from their salaries, they expect rewards which include improvements of work conditions among others. If they do not see benefits, they tend to develop counterproductive behaviors which may vary from one person to another but the commonly experienced is ditching the union. Leaders of trade unions are regarded as custodians of almost all affairs of the union functions. They therefore play double roles between members and the government in order to keep the relationship beneficial to all. This paper regard leaders as middle-men who facilitate the relationship. This theory of political exchange was thought relevant to this study because it is about relevance of trade union's functions involving three parties coming to interplay. The parties are the government, trade unions and the members which always interact in a day-to-day manner hence easy to evaluate the role and impact.

The political exchange perspective is equated with the classical theory of industrial democracy by (Webb & Webb, 1897). According to Manda and Mwabu (2019), this theory assumes that trade unionism is an extension of democracy from political sphere to industrial sphere. According to this theory, unionism is regarded as the class struggle but with the intention of suppressing managerial dictatorship as well as creating better working conditions. This is unlike the preceded revolutionary political theory by Marx and Angels which viewed unionism as an instrument to overthrow capitalism (ruling class). The main emphasis of the theory of industrial democracy is on bargaining in work places just like the political exchange perspective which focus on the same orientation.

1.4. Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework was derived from the four dimensions with eight indicators presented in figure 1. The dimensions were used because they are key to understanding the establishment and functioning of trade unions. These parameters were drawn from the four-dimensional frameworks of Civil society index (CSI) which are structure, environment, impact and values (Fioramonti & Heinrich, 2007) and (Malena & Finn Heinrich, 2007). Structure has to do with the internal arrangements and capabilities of trade unions. It involves how members perceive existence of trade unions especially during the time of crises and the activeness of members in achieving trade union activities. Environment relates to the external factors that influence the functioning of trade unions which include legal framework, political and job working environment. Values are the principles maintained by the trade unions whereby in this context is about the preferable approach used to defend rights of workers. Impact refers to the extent to which trade unions influence issues basing mainly on the accountability of leaders to the party to shoulder blames between members and the leaders. Trade unions are regarded as part of civil society organizations hence the indicators used to assess the functioning of CSOs apply to trade unions as well. The dimensions are customized into the context of trade unions in order to find exactly the key areas which show the day-to-day operations of trade unions.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Approach and Design

This was an online study utilizing cross-sectional survey design. Different studies have pointed out important methodological issues of contentious when opting to use online surveys such as sampling issues, response rate, item nonresponse, data quality and ethical issues (Adu-Amankwah, 2022; Loomis & Paterson, 2018; Medlin, Roy, & Ham Chai, 1999; Minnaar & Heystek, 2013; Nayak & Narayan, 2019; Regmi, Waithaka, Paudyal, Simkhada, & van Teijlingen, 2016; Van Selm & Jankowski, 2006). All these studies have mentioned in one way or another the challenges associated with inline surveys. It is however important to clarify that although online survey was used even before the eruption of Covid 19 pandemic, the approach became more preferable during and after the pandemic following the conditions of remoteness and keeping distance among others to control the spread of the disease. Therefore, despite some weaknesses associated with the online surveys, the advantages like convenience in terms of timeframe and less cost, storing of data, easy retrieval of information and simplified analysis have surpassed the challenges identified. Fortunately, the advancement of ICT has enabled formulation of different online groups through WhatsApp and telegram whereby the population of research can be accessed instantly by sending a link to the respective groups. In this study, bias related to design phase and data analysis stage

were minimized by consulting colleagues to scrutinize the tools as well as take part in data analysis. This was done deliberately to reduce prejudices such as leading question, halo effect, confirmation and cultural biases. The means of reducing biases for each step of research are explained in each subsequent section.

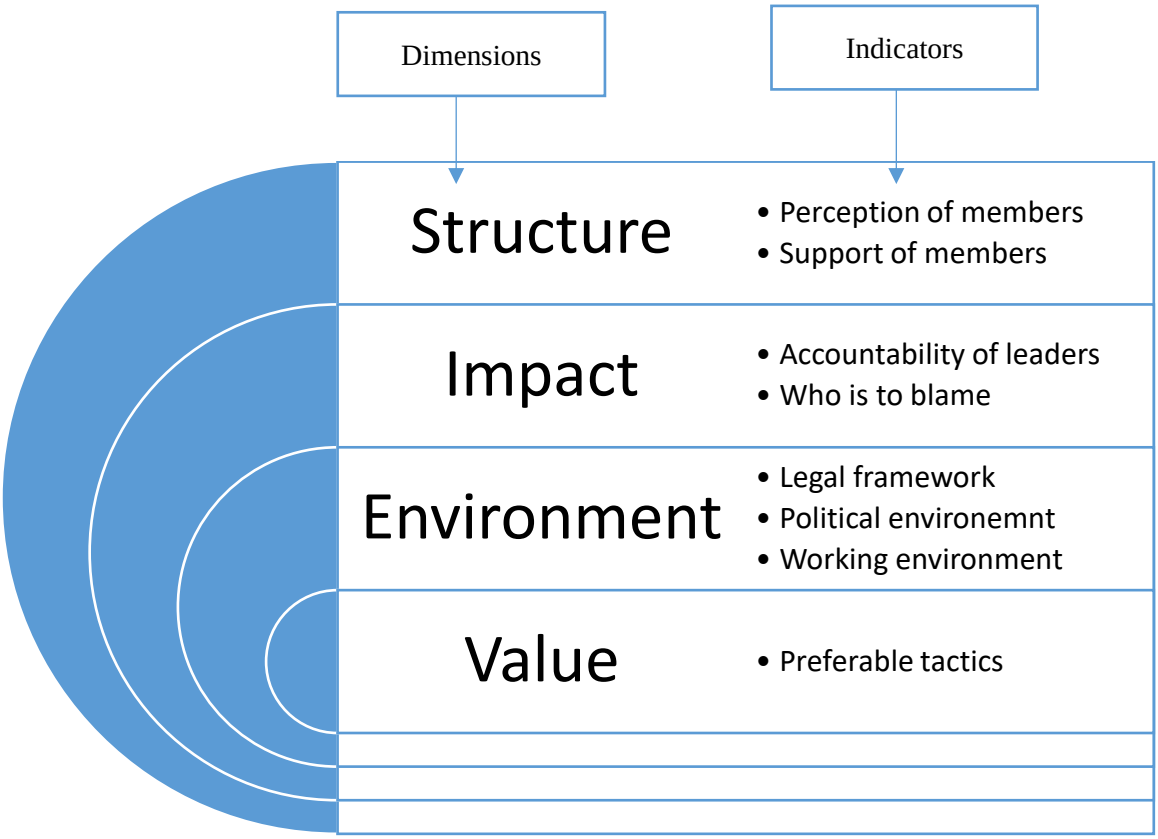

Figure 1: Framework of Measuring Role of Trade Unions
Source: Author's own construction from a framework of measuring CSOs

2.2. Population of the study

The targeted and accessed population of this study involved members from the three selected trade unions among the thirty-three (33) registered trade unions in Tanzania as per PMO-LYED https://www.kazi.go.tz about registered trade unions in Tanzania. The trade unions selected are the Tanzania Higher Learning Institutions Trade Union (THTU), Researchers, Academician and Allied Workers Trade Union (RAAWU) and Teachers Trade Union (TTU). The reasons for choosing these three trade unions among others is that they share almost the same characteristics due to the nature of working environment (education institutions). It should be remembered that trade unions in Tanzania and world over are established basing on the nature of the work or precisely from workers who are performing the same responsibilities. Therefore, all these three selected unions are formed in education institutions. Other trade unions were not included in this study hence other studies may consider extending to cover them. To be more precise, only trade unions from education sector were included in this study.

2.3. Sampling Techniques

Medlin et al. (1999) have identified three categories of samples for online surveys namely recruited, unrestricted and screened samples. Recruited sample involves consultations, selecting and control of access of the respondents. Unrestricted sample entails widely sharing of the questionnaire to everyone online or to the targeted population without restricting access. Screened sample includes filtering out the data from the only required respondents. This study used unrestricted online sampling technique whereby the Google survey questionnaire was widely distributed to the recognized social media groups belonging to the three trade union members in their respective work places. Prior to communicating the

questionnaire, the researcher contacted the key personnel of the respective trade unions and informed them about the intention of the questionnaire.

In order to ensure attainment of maximum response rate, the multiple reminders as well as use of more than one online forum such as WhatsApp groups, telegram groups and emails were used in this study. For item nonresponse, it was necessary to make some important questions compulsory in order to ensure that they are all responded. Fortunately, the items which were made compulsory are multiple choice in nature hence the respondent was given enough freedom of choice. There was no fear about data quality since the questionnaire was designed in a user-friendly design hence all necessary questions were answered appropriately. Data management was conveniently handled as the members filled the questionnaire online and the responses were automatically retrieved from Google forms.

2.4. Ethical Issues

Just like in the traditional survey, ethical issues were fully observed for online survey. Respondent's informed consent was sought through short introduction and request to participate in filling the survey questionnaire. It means the respondent could only fill the questionnaire upon his or her consent. There was no any force applied to the respondents to participate in the survey. Even for 'forced responding', where a participant cannot move on to a further question until an answer to the current question has been provided was done only to multiple choice items where the respondent had enough freedom of choice. Additionally, the respondent was free to drop from participating in the process of filling the questionnaire any time by not submitting the responses before or even at the final stage. Respondent's identity was not disclosed as there were no anywhere, they were required to introduce themselves by names. All these observed ethical principles are in line Wilms (2019) and URT (2022) who emphasize informed consent, privacy and appropriate use of data as important ways of ensuring personal data protection during data processing (collection, storing and analyzing).

2.5. Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis was done through descriptive statistics to calculate frequencies and percentages. Both Excel and SPSS tools were used for quantitative data analysis. Qualitative data analysis was done using conceptual content analysis which is the type of content analysis that focuses on the number of times a concept occurs in a set of data and is generally focused on explicit data. Conceptual content analysis enabled the researcher to derive themes as well as perform a frequency analysis of the texts about the views of trade union members on different parameters (Elo et al., 2014; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Content analysis was done through a normal code book procedure whereby two types of units were recorded. The first is the recording unit where one common or key words was recorded on how many times it was mentioned to formulate a theme. The second unit is the context which focus on the larger content expressed by a phrase or sentence and not a single word (Prasad, 2008).

3. Findings of the Study

The findings were obtained through deductive approach basing on the parameters of the four dimensions of CSO indicators. They are presented through tables, figures and quotational texts according to the parameters. This section begins with the description of the characteristics of respondents as shown in figure 2;

Figure 2 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. From the figure, government employees outnumbered those from private sector. This is an indication that, the unionized government institutions are many compared to those of private. In addition to that, the respondents were categorized into three namely ordinary members, leaders at lower rank and leaders at higher rank. Ordinary members dominated hence the findings reflect the reality of the perceptions of the trade union members. The number of male respondents outnumbered that of female counterparts but no any significant impact on the findings due to sex since all workers go through the same conditions of work environment irrespective of their sex. Another important revelation is the response rate. Since the unrestricted online technique was used, it was expected to get more responses than the one attained. Although the sample size of 137 meets the minimum threshold of the sample size required for research

in general as well as the sample size of above one hundred intended by this study, there is uneven distribution of samples from the selected unions as shown in the figure. This undoubtedly might have influenced the patterns of the findings of this study. This shortcoming can be addressed in future by other researches focusing more on how to improve the response rate of the online surveys.

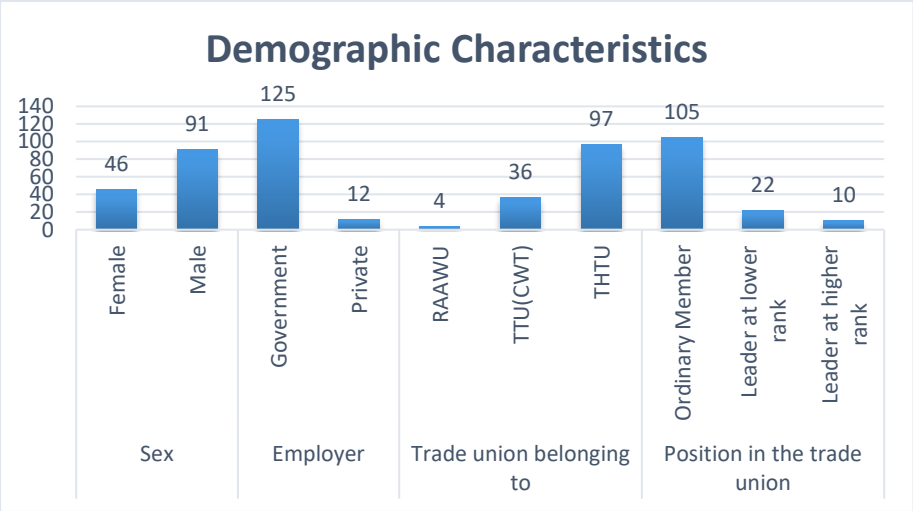

Figure 2: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents
Source: Online Survey questionnaire (2021)

3.1. Perceptions of the Members on the Importance of Trade Unions in Work Places

The study wished to collect views of the trade union members on whether the existence of trade unions in work places is important to them. The data was obtained through survey questionnaire. Descriptive data analysis was done using SPSS to calculate frequencies and percent to reveal the views of people relating to whether or not the trade unions are important in work places. The results are as presented in figure 3

Figure 3: Members' Views on Presence of Trade Unions
Source: Online Survey Questionnaire (2021)

The findings presented in figure 3 show that members of trade unions are positive about existence of trade unions in work places. This is an indication that perhaps members of trade unions are well served by their respective unions. These findings correlate with the findings of the study conducted by Dlamini (2018) showing that employees' perceptions were fairly positive regarding the effectiveness of trade unions in grievance handling and that belonging to a trade union is beneficial. This suggests that despite of the challenges

encountered by trade unions, members may still have some hopes on those representative organs. In addition, Schillinger (2005) insists that despite the enormous weakness of trade unions in Africa, they are still the important vehicles of defending workers interests. The following quotation gives more clarification;

Although their power to influence wages and working conditions and to defend workers has suffered enormously and tends to be quite weak nowadays, it would be wrong to write-off African trade union. After a long period, which saw virtually no new investment in formal activities taking place in Africa, there are encouraging signs that foreign investment is picking up again, creating new opportunities for trade union organization. Above all, in many, countries unions remain a political force to be reckoned with, as they continue to be one of the very few societal organizations in Africa with a sizeable constituency, country-wide structures and the potential for mobilizing members on social or political matters (Schillinger 2005 pg. 1)

The findings presented might be surprising to some people who may have expected the negative approval of trade unions considering the situation of the time. It is however important to note that the majority of the respondents as presented in figure 1 were from one trade union hence might have influenced the nature of the results. Probably, performance of trade unions may differ from one another depending on various factors. Another study excluding THTU may be conducted to find out if there is any difference in performance of trade unions.

3.2. Accountability of trade Union Leaders

The respondents were asked to give their views on how leaders are fulfilling their responsibilities accordingly in those trade unions. The findings are presented in figure4

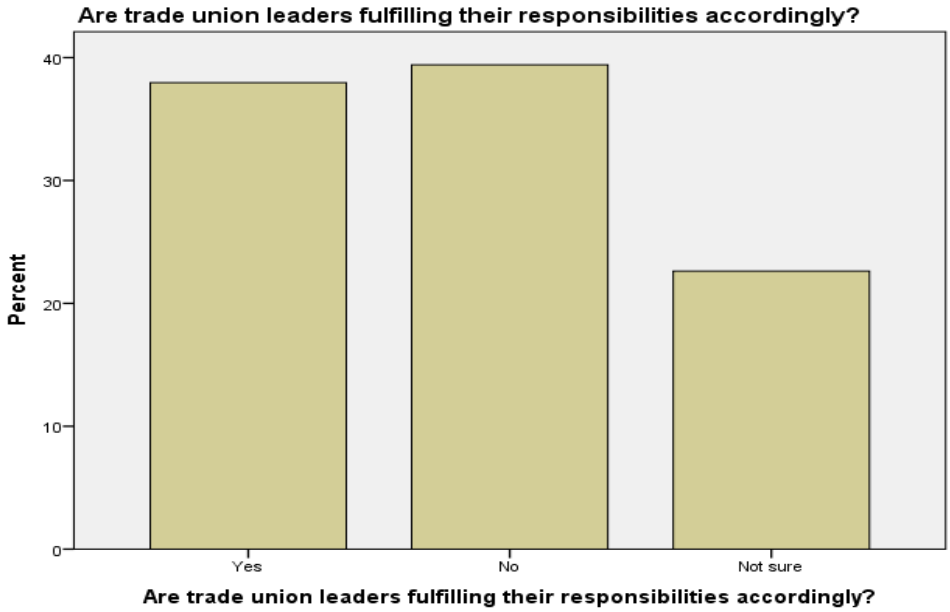

Figure 4: Leader's Performance
Source: Online Survey Questionnaire (2021)

The findings presented in figure 4 indicate that there are mixed reactions of the respondents about how trade union leaders discharge their duties to meet the expectations of workers. Statistically, the margin between those who said NO and YES is too minimal. Again, those who are not sure cannot be ignored. However, taking the simple majority, the trade union leaders have not done enough to serve their members. The findings by Dlamini (2018) argue that trade union representatives (leaders) lacked resources, knowledge, competencies and skills for handling employees' grievances. These factors might be the setbacks of trade unions in fulfilling their responsibilities. As a means to address those challenges, Dlamini is of the view that trade unions should consider the importance of managerial support of their roles; extensive training programs for union representatives and awareness campaigns to sensitize employees regarding the functions of trade unions. Babeiya

(2011) urges trade unions to strengthen their solidarity in order to stand as a strong collective force hence effectively participate in dialogues and other struggles. He adds that trade unions should borrow pro-human rights groups that are argued to a great extent been successful in their demands because of their solidarity. These findings are therefore the eye opener to leaders of trade unions to reorganize themselves on how better to discharge their responsibilities.

3.3. Support of Members

The respondents were also asked to comment on the activeness and support of members of trade unions. The findings are as presented in figure 5

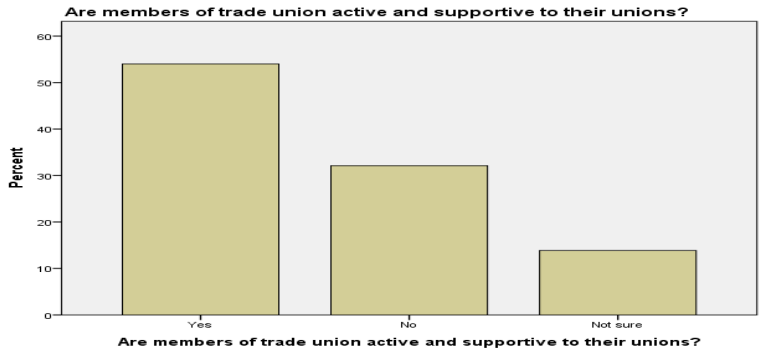

Figure 4: Support of Members
Source: Online Survey Questionnaire (2021)

The findings from figure 5 describe the nature of the members of trade unions. Majority of the respondents agree to the question that the members are supportive. Usually, the support expected from members are like willingness to consent deduction of their salaries, attendance in meetings, constructive comments and close follow up on how the union is faring. The main challenge however is little awareness of members towards trade unions and there are no deliberate training programs for members to be well versed with the role unions in their work places (Mussa, 2014). According to Zammit and Rizzo (2002) trade union members should embrace the spirit of collectivism features (solidarity) to achieve desired common purpose. This can be taken as a general call to all trade union members to make sure that they actively participate in the affairs of their unions. Members are directly responsible to oversee all functions of their union including financial matters, internal democracies and accountability of leaders to mention a few examples.

3.4. Who is to Blame?

This study also sought to reveal the one to blame between members and leaders when the grievances are not attended. Figure 6 presents the findings on who is to blame between leaders, members or both.

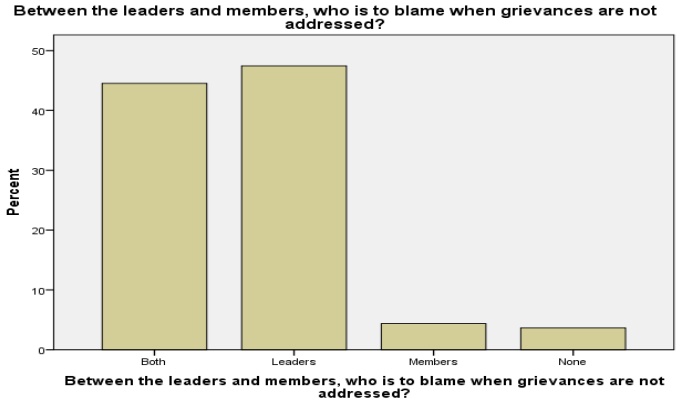

Figure 6: The one to Blame between Members and Leaders
Source: Online Survey Questionnaire (2021)

The findings presented in figure 6 clearly indicate that leaders take the large share of the blame in the event issues of employees are not addressed. These findings relate to the popular quote given by Maxwell (2007) that *a leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way*. Babeiya (2011) uses the management perspective to emphasize that, it is the role of a leader to show the mission and vision of the organization. Therefore, trade union leaders have no escaping root for poor performance of the trade unions. Additionally, Zammit and Rizzo (2002) emphasize that it is the responsibility of trade union leaders to create positive image of their respective unions. All these are in line with the reasons obtained from respondents as presented in figure 7;

Figure 7: Why Blame Leaders and not Members?
Source: Online Survey Questionnaire (2021)

3.5. Comments about Legal Framework Governing Trade Unions

This study wished to know the perception of members on the legal framework governing trade unions in Tanzania on whether it is friendly or unfriendly. Figure8 presents the findings;

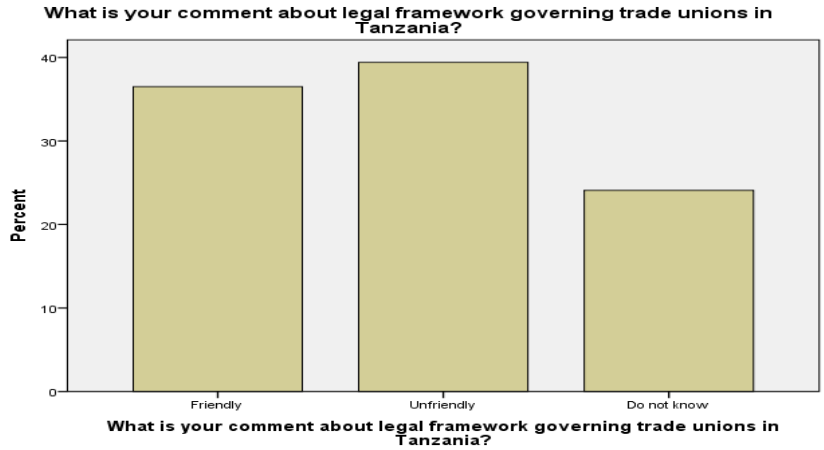

Figure 8: Comments about the Legal Framework
Source: Online Survey Questionnaire (2021)

The findings presented in figure 8show that the majority of the respondents are of the opinion that a legal framework governing trade unions in Tanzania is unfriendly. The legal framework being referred to in this context are all labour laws, public service laws, regulations, guidelines and circulars governing the institutions and trade unions as well. There are different studies which share the same findings with this one about the unfriendliness of the legal framework in Tanzania. The Law Reform Commission of Tanzania report of 2005 enumerates a number of areas where strict control of trade unions through legislation is applied. According to the report, the unions are controlled through; collective bargaining, Bureaucratic machinery for settlement of trade disputes, enactment of the disciplinary code and most currently through the Registrar of Trade Unions and Employers Associations. In addition to that, Rugeiyamu et al. (2018) are of the view that legal environment for trade unions is opaque. In the recent years, the government has been busy amending labour laws to ensure more control of labour sector and so to trade unions. That is why the majority though with the minimal margin view the legal framework as unfriendly.

3.6. Comments about Political Environment

Furthermore, this study intended to explore the nature of political environment where trade unions operate. The question was about whether the political environment is friendly or unfriendly. Figure 9 presents the findings;

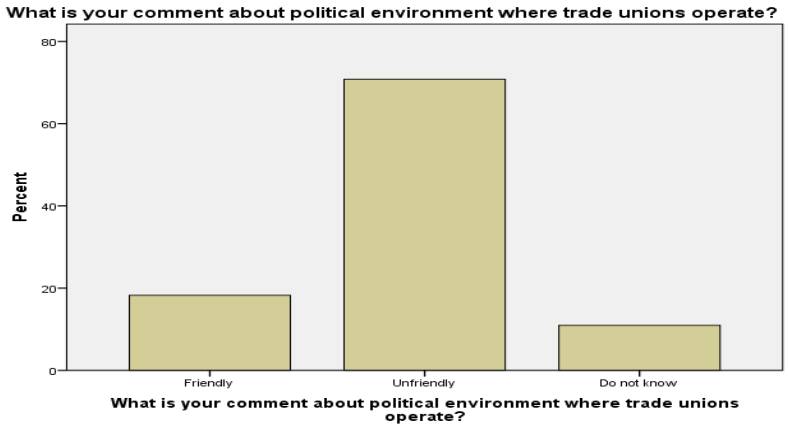

Figure 9: Comments about Political Environment
Source: Online Survey Questionnaire (2021)

The findings presented in figure 9 describe that the nature of political environment where trade unions operate is unfriendly. In the context of this study, political environment includes the general leadership and management of the country from the president's office to the Ministries, independent departments, Regional Administration, Local Government Authorities and other units of leadership and management at grassroots level. During the period of the past five years, political class has been witnessed being rude to civil servants. Some politicians used to fire and embarrass workers publicly contrary to the set laws and procedures of handling discipline of workers. That is undoubtedly the reasons that the political environment is rated to be unfriendly. These findings concur with the study by Schillinger (2005) who argued that African unions have found themselves in an increasingly hostile political environment for quite some time now. Rugeiyamu et al. (2018) give more emphasize that political environment is problematic to trade unions operation. The background of this study is detailed about the political environment of the time. One clear message derived here is that there is no way functioning of trade unions being detached from the political environment of a particular country.

3.7. Observation about Job Working Environment

In addition to these, this study examined the working environment of the members of trade unions. The intention was to determine nature of the environment between friendly and hostile.

Figure 10: Working Environment
Source: Online Survey Questionnaire (2021)

The findings presented in figure 10 show that the respondents rated the working environment positively. Although the statistical difference between friendly and hostile situations is not huge, at least the majority of the respondents who are in favour of friendly nature of the working environment surpassed 50%. This revelation departs from the two previous environments (legal and political) which seem to be hostile. This revelation might raise two main explanations. One is the fact that work environment are the premises where trade union members work hence, they have control over it. Two is that management can easily be convinced even by circumstances to engage unions in dialogue for common good. Zammit and Rizzo (2002) found the same view similar to this that trade unions are able to effectively construct a social order according to the set laws to guide their actions in labour relation environment. The social order that is usually established according to them should not do away with prerogatives of management (retained) but the workers have achieved greater control on their working lives.

3.8. Preferable Successful Tactic

The respondents were asked to choose the preferable successful tactic between hard and soft in solving worker's grievances. Findings are presented in figure 11

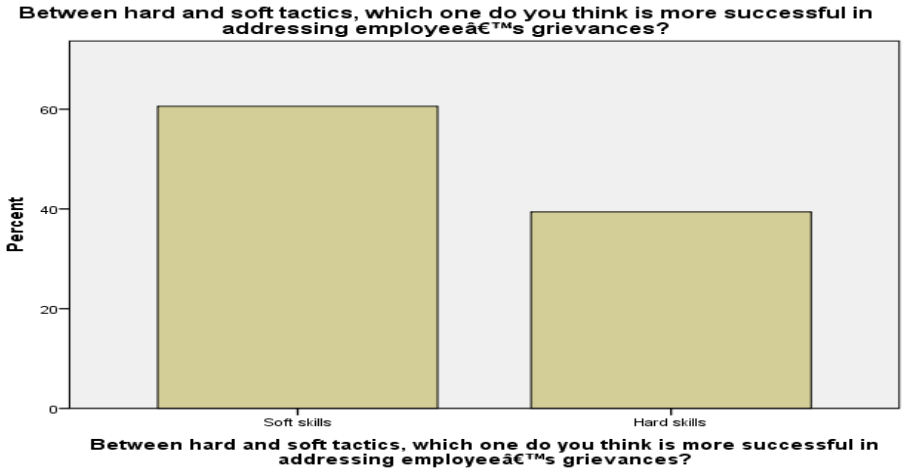

Figure 11: Preferable Successful Tactic
Source: Online Survey Questionnaire (2021)

The findings presented in figure 11 point out that the majority of the respondents opinionated that soft skills tactic are the most preferable in addressing employee's grievances. The soft tactics are mostly diplomatic means which include but not limited to dialogue, discussion in the meetings, participation in decision making organs and frequent consultations. The findings seem to reflect the Employment and Labour Relations Act No 6 of 2004 which stipulates the means of handling worker's problems. The first approach is a written and signed collective bargaining agreement by two parties namely the employer and the recognized union with majority members. The second approach is formulation of a forum for workers' participation in a workplace usually known as Workers Council. The third approach is the strikes whereby the unions are allowed to get into strikes after fulfilling legal requirements. The fourth approach is mediation and arbitration through the Commission. Another avenue is the use of labour court. It is therefore evident that the means of addressing worker's problems are provided for by the law in Tanzania. In the view of this study, these approaches can be categorized into two; hard and soft skills. The hard skills are those related to violent means or in a more specific language the strikes. Soft skills are those which can be termed as diplomatic or non-violent tactics. When the respondents were asked about the reasons for preferring soft skills over hard skills gave the reasons as presented in figure 12;

Figure 12: Reasons for Soft Skills
Source: Online Survey Questionnaire (2021)

The findings of this study typically reflect the long historical journey for development of trade unions in the world. Trade unions have gone through three main stages of development since the inception of unionism spirit. Each stage came with its own approaches of addressing employee's grievances but one thing that has remained common in all stages is the spirit of unionism which never dies. The first stage was the beginning of the spirit of unionism during industrial revolution which was characterized by outright suppression by state machineries. The main approach used was violence through strikes. The second stage was during the beginning and middle of 20th century which was characterized by limited acceptance and toleration by state machineries. During this stage, both violent and dialogue approaches were used to handle employee's concerns. The third stage is general acceptance and recognition from the end of 20th century and mainly the beginning of 21st century. In this third stage, the state machineries realized that the spirit of unionism never dies; it just changes its form from time to time. Therefore, the only solution is to accommodate those trade unions by generally accepting them and recognize their operations by enacting legislations to govern them. The main approach which is now applicable is industrial relations. That is why in Tanzania the Employment and Labour Relations Act No 6 of 2004 was enacted to regulate the operation of trade unions

Therefore, the findings that soft skills are the most preferred tactics to be used by trade unions fits well with the current philosophy of the industrial relations orientations. Trade unions and in particular the leaders should always remember that there is still so much to be done to promote employee's welfare in work places. That is why one of the inspirational quotes by Lane Kirkland emphasizes that;

We have come too far, - struggled too long, - sacrificed too much and have too much left to do, - to allow that which we have achieved for the good of all to be swept away without a fight

In addition, Mother Jones as quoted by James (2008) strongly believes that

The next generation will not charge us for what we have done; they will charge and condemn us for what we have left undone

All these quotes are a clear reminder to trade unions, particularly leaders that issues of employees' welfare are an endless struggle. What matters a lot is consciousness about the appropriate approach to use. Since the current legislation embraces industrial relations, the appropriate tactic to work on is the soft skills. Therefore, trade unions (members and leaders) should be conversant on disciplinary procedures, dispute resolution procedures and grievances handling procedures as key to implementing soft skills tactics in work places. Even the environments (legal, political and work places) where trade unions operate can be changed from unfriendly to friendly.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Basing on the findings presented, it can be concluded that despite various criticisms and shortcomings experienced by trade unions, they are still the essential vehicles for worker's wellbeing in work places. They can experience difficult moments in their existence but they are still needed to balance the work environment. Therefore, unionism is an endless struggle that cannot be stopped by whoever. . Unions need to be more proactive and take initiatives to create a link between ordinary members of trade unions and their leaders in order to strengthen the power of bargaining. This study also put forward that soft skills tactic is the only sustainable means to be embraced and applied by trade unions in addressing employee's grievances if and only if it is properly implemented. This study is of the view that since the majority of the respondents who participated in this study were from Higher Education Institutions is an indication that another study of this nature can be carried out by scaling up the number of respondents from local government authorities and civil service in an attempt to improve online approach. Another study can also be conducted to unearth the future of trade unions in the rapid changing world in terms of labour mobility, social demographic changes (more youths in labour market), fast growing informal sector and the impact of ICT in work places (working remotely). In terms of administrative action, the concept of industrial relations can be strengthened by trade unions and employers to make workplaces friendlier and not hostile by establishing collective bargaining agreements within the set legal framework. Both parties (management and trade unions) must learn to coexist together.

Authors Contribution

Paul Loisulie: Complete write the article and incorporate the comments.

Conflict of Interests/Disclosures

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