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THE STRENGTH OF TRADE UNION IN DECISION MAKING: A PARADIGM SHIFT IN THE MANAGEMENT OF ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This article examined the strength of trade unions in decision making: a paradigm shift in the management of organizations, using the secondary method of data collection. The various concepts central to the work were conceptualized such as: trade unions, collective bargaining, organization, management and decision making. Two theoretical frame works were adopted in the paper. These are: The social exchange theory and the group theory. Several decision making theories were identified in the article. The article found the strength of trade unions to include: proffering solutions to industrial dispute through initiation of collective bargaining, reduction in employees' turn over through the introduction of a conducive working atmosphere, creation of job security for workers, securing higher wages and a better pension benefits for employees, enhancement of employees' job performance, raising grievances on behalf of employees, entrenchment of industrial peace and harmony in the workplace, a veritable instrument of democratization of organizations and authoritarian regimes, and so on. The article concluded with the policy implications of the study/recommendations for more appropriate ways to enhance the performance of trade unions in organizations.

Keywords: Trade union, participation, collective bargaining, organizational performance, decision making.

Introduction

Trade unions are known as labour unions. They are instrumental to the harmonious co-existence between employers and employees (Quain, 2019). Trade unions and associations, such as professional and sectoral ones, together with civil society organizations, play a pivotal role as institutional actor in filling the gap created by the ineffectiveness of political parties in carrying out social mobilization against bad governance. Independent professional associations are different from labour unions. They are bodies that advance the labour and economic interest of workers of various sectors of the economy. They are mainly representation of the middle-class groups. However, with the dramatic decline in their socio-economic standard due to an open market and neoliberal policies embarked upon by mostly third world countries, those groups seek recourse to their unions to mount opposition to the anti-people policies being proposed by the government (Mouawad, 2021). As a result of rampant political crises, and the decline roles of traditional parties and labour unions, independent professional associations have been transformed into frame works capable of securing the transfer of power. In Lebanon, independent unions are formed through the approval of a relevant minister. This is a legal obstacle which causes the splitting or weakening of association-based action (Mouawad, 2021).

Active trade unions and professional associations are a part of the most crucial forms of civil society organizations. These groups are well positioned in eradicating dictatorial leaderships, introducing democratic revolution, enhancing freedoms for the citizenry, and ensuring the entrenchment of economic and social rights of the different sectors which they regulate, such as health, education, housing, transportation, labour and employment, freedom of association, as well as the right to protest and strike. Professional associations, such as labour unions, have always been perceived as threats by totalitarian regimes in the Arab World, who often times place them on their target lists. Autocratic regimes desire to stifle organizations and union that they perceived as threat to the survival of their regime, and derail them and their leadership from political and professional activities that might generate networks and contacts that could endanger the existence of those regimes (Agati, Samir, Ahmed, and Srour, 2021).

In most countries, unions of intellectuals, journalists, and activists play a leading role in the mobilization of the people and shaping of public opinion, in addition to individual and collective freedoms and defence (Alhammood, 2021). Labour unions have played a paramount role in democratization of organizations, and have not only contributed to the improvement of working conditions but also participating actively in the formulation of labour laws and policies (Sukhwan, n.d.). Most countries' constitution make provision for the right to organize bargain and act collectively, since these are fundamental rights that have the strongest and most direct impact, they are of a higher status than non-union organizations. Basically, trade unions are the most powerful organization backed with constitutional powers. Unlike, the non-union organizations who enjoy special protection granted by the constitution, so, they are empowered by a different legislation, which could sometimes be in conflict with the constitution (Sukhwan, n.d.).

The emergence of trade union is a product of employees' agitation to participate in decision making process that enhances their wellbeing, and collective bargaining is the basic instrument for such an achievement (Okpalibekwe, Onyekwelu and Dike, 2015). Trade unions exist as a forum of representation of the interests of employees in organizations, due to the fact that managers are more powerful than the rank and file employees and the prevalence of multiple stakeholders. It is most likely that the managers may embark on actions that benefit one set of stakeholders such as the shareholders to the detriment of others, such as the employees. Thus, employees' reasons for unionizing are to ensure the need for job security, or safety of work environment, and to develop the capacity for addressing certain management policies that have caused them dissatisfaction. Consequently, workers have discovered that collective effort aimed at redressing abnormal situation in the workplace is more potent than the efforts of individual workers considered separately. In this process, they are able to exercise more visibility and influence in workplace decision making (Okpalibekwe et al, 2015).

Historically, certain forms of trade union had existed in Nigeria prior to modern trade unionism. The emergence of trade unions in Nigeria may have occurred as a response to events elsewhere (Okpalibekwe et al, 2015). The Sierra Leone experience of trade unionism has a great implications on the emergence of trade unionism in Nigeria (Yesusfu, 1986, cited in Okpalibekwe et al, 2015). The 1938 Trade Union Act legalized trade unions in Nigeria, and also restricted the emergence of several mushroom unions in the country (Okpalibekwe et al,

2015). In a similar development, in order to ensure the sustainability of trade union in the United States, they were granted legal protection through the Railway Labour Act of 1926, the Anti-Injunction Act of 1932, and the National Labour Relations Act of 1935. These legislations shield employees who partake in union activities from victimization by their employers (MacDonald, 2019).

The article was divided into various sections in order to achieve its set objectives. These are: the introduction which is a prelude to the article, definition of key concepts adopted in the study, theoretical frame work adopted were the social exchange and group theories, decision making theories were examined in-depth. Other issues investigated were the strength of trade unions in organizational decision making, impacts of trade unions to the emergence of democratic governance: the experience of the Arab Spring. These were followed by conclusion and recommendations.

THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

The Social Exchange Theory

They paper adopted the social exchange theory as its theoretical framework. Social exchange is the basic social processes on which relations between individuals and within social entity are based (Blau, 1964). The theory was propounded by George Homans and Peter Blau (Dagunduro and Adenugba, 2021). According to the theory, the work of employees is based on social exchange which involves making provision for benefits that help secure future obligations, and the trust it replicates. Blau's theory of social exchange is restricted to activities that are based on receiving reward for action performed. Employees often cease to perform those actions when they are denied the expected commensurate reactions (Dagunduro and Adenugba, 2021).

The exchange theory argues that the employees' commitment to work is predicated on their perceived balance between what they put into work and what comes to them as a reward for their labour. The employees' perception of favourableness of the social exchange will serve as a boost to their commitment to the organization. Employees reciprocate their employers in terms of showing more dedication to work when they perceived fulfillment of management obligations. In other words, the extent to which organizational managers fulfill the obligations and expectations of employees is the same extent employees would feel secure and satisfied, and then feel obliged to reciprocate appropriately. Employees are so much concerned to see a balance between what they contribute to the organization and what they get in return. If there is imbalance in the relationship of the above stated variables, it will amount to an exhibition of unpleasant emotional outburst by the employees, such as resentment, withdrawal, absenteeism, and turn over. The capacity for employees to be committed to their work and willing to enhance their performance is dependent on their perception that the employment relationship between them and their managers is based on a balanced social exchange, but contrary to this sort of arrangement, workers may withdraw their support and commitment from the organization (Dagunduro and Adenugba, 2021).

The relevance of social exchange theory to this article is based on the fact that the cooperation and productivity of employees in the work place is dependent on the extent at which the managers and employers permit employees involvement in organizational decision making. So, being able to influence the direction of the organizational decision making process then

becomes a criterion for effective performance of employees in the organization. So, managers who are aware of this organizational dynamics tend to give room to employees' participation in organizational decision making process in order to motivate them to a higher performance and productivity, and to eschew negative social attitudes, such as resentment, apathy, absenteeism and eventually high employees' turn over on the part of employees.

The Group Theory

This article is also anchored on the group theory which Chikendu (2002), cited in Okpalibekwe et al (2015) and Nwokoye (2008), observed to have originated from Arthur Bentley and expanded by David Truman. It formulation is based on its opposition to the institutional approach, which centers on formal dimensions of an institution, governmental structures and formal rules that underlies the pattern of interaction and relationship among governmental entities. The theory gives an explanation of a social phenomenon with emphasis on group activities (Okpalibekwe et al (2015). The argument of group theory is based on the fact that the political life consists of interaction and struggle among groups. The group theory is centered on group activities rather than individual activities (Okpalibekwe et al (2015).The rigid and formal quality of the institutional approach to political inquiry has been criticized by Bentley (1949) cited in Okpalibekwe et al (2015).

In his view, society consists of dynamic activities instead of rigid and specific institutions. The emphasis of this theory is not on group structures per se, but on group activities. The characteristic feature of this theory is the activity. It views organization based on its directional activity. It does not study a group that emerged by sheer co-incidence. The specific activity carried out by a group is more significant than its structural composition. Bentley noted that the activity component of a group was directed and propelled by interest. Interest is the claim and counterclaims which one group tend to exercise over each other in a social system. The organization of groups is a product of interest Okpalibekwe et al (2015). Group theorists argued that the pattern of politics that prevails in any society is a function of group interaction in that society and the competition of such groups among themselves in a bid to influence public policy to their own advantage. Consequently, each group strive to make input in the decision making process of the government, and its success in this endevour is dependent on the extent of the group cohesion, organization, status, quality of leadership and wealth. In the view of group theorists, every society is composed of several groups who tries at all cost to maximize their various interests. Groups tend to achieve relevance at the expense of other groups. There is usually inequitable distribution of resources in most organizational settings, such as money, skill, power, and so on, among various groups in the society, and these differences in resource acquisition by these groups are responsible for the extent at which a group is capable of realizing its interests and objectives (Okpalibekwe et al, 2015).

The groups within a society deploy all weapon available to its to determine and project its image and interest ahead of others, thus setting the agenda for others to follow in a hegemonic fashion. In this process, the groups that appears to be losing out would agitate equal representation of their interest in the scheme of things. In a nutshell, the most powerful group would always seek the dominance of other groups, since in negotiation, once interest comes first before others. Any group that is most powerful tend to define the fate of other groups and deploy their weapon to impose their interests and views on others (Okpalibekwe et al, 2015).

This theory is relevant to this article because it provides an explanation to the behaviour of employers or managers and employees with respect to attempts made by both of them to influence organizational decision and policies to their own advantage. That is, it explains the roles of employers and employees represented by trade union in terms of each trying to impose its interest on the other.

The Strength of Trade Union in Organizational Decision Making

Trade unions play a mediatory role between workers and business owners to help proffer solution to industrial dispute. The collective bargaining usually initiated by labour unions save employers' company the time, energy and money that would have been spent to negotiate wage increases and benefits with employees by themselves, especially when it involves hiring the services of experts to help in such engagement. It also save the cost of litigation that would have been incurred by both employers and employees should the employers terminate the employment of the employees with any clear violation of the organization's standard and policies (Quain, 2019). The essence of trade unions in organizations is not to engender conflict with the organization, but to create an atmosphere of job security, comfort and fair treatment for employees. The achievement of these objectives encourages employees to stay with the organization rather than seeking for more favourable alternatives in some other enterprises. Employees that unionized earn an approximately 30 percent more wages than their counterparts who do not unionized, and 92 percent of workers who unionized have health insurance benefits, while 68 percent of those that do not unionized are entitled to health benefits. Also, unionized workers are much more likely to receive secured pension entitlements than employees who are not unionized. Through the creation of fair wages and benefits for employees, trade unions assist in making the workers satisfied and motivated to put in their best efforts in achieving the goals and objectives of the organization rather than searching for jobs in other companies (Quain, 2019).

The relationship between employers and employees is characterized with imbalance skewed against the employees, since employers possess the right to hire and fire employees at will, although subject to limited exceptions imposed by the prevailing labour laws. Trade unions correct this imbalance through collective bargaining and orchestrating cooperative action to protect the rights of workers and help them secure high wages (MacDonald, 2019).When managers schedule meetings with employees which the employees perceived may lead to a disciplinary action being imposed on them or outright termination of their job appointment, they may become nervous due to inexperience or lack of training on the part of most employees in partaking in disciplinary interviews. So, in order to overcome the aforementioned social skill deficit, union members are empowered with the right to representation at such investigative interviews guaranteed in the United States through the confirmation of the Supreme Court case of National Labour Relations Board (NLRB) versus Weingarten, Inc. The application of this right is subject to the workers' request for representation and their perception that the meeting scheduled between the managers and they are disciplinary in nature. Individual workers over time have expressed discouragement in raising complaints against an employer for an unfair treatment due to fear of loss of job or victimization by employers. So, trade unions have been very useful in raising grievances on behalf of employees (MacDonald, 2019). This trend has contributed immensely to industrial harmony and work progress in organizations.

Collective bargaining is democratic in orientation. It initiates industrial democracy in the organization. Employees participate in the functioning of organizations through elected representatives, and thus reducing management authoritarianism, and with the management still entitled to their legitimate rights and privileges to exercise control in the workplace. The democratic nature of collective bargaining is such that subordinates in the relations are given the freedom to manage their own affairs, without causing any damage to the important general interest of the organization. In such an atmosphere, there is the assurance of the achievement of productivity of workers and the overall attainment of the goals of the organization (Okpalibekwe, et al, 2015).The origin of the term collective bargaining has been traced to Webb and Webb, which they adopted to describe the process of agreeing to terms of labour conditions between employees and employers or their respective associations (Rose, 2008).Collective agreement is the outcome of collective bargaining. Collective bargaining is aimed at achieving industrial democracy. It is an instrument for resolving organizational conflict between employees and employers, as well as the fine-tuning of the terms and conditions of employment (Okpalibekwe, et al, 2015).

The roles of trade unions are as follows: trade unions exist to enhance the bargaining capacity of workers in relation to employers, protection of workers from unfair treatment of management, and provision of a collective identity to workers in order to better project and advance their interests and wellbeing as well as embarking on social objectives through collaborative effort with other institutions in the society in order to promote social and economic development and advancement of the society (Okpalibekwe et al, 2015).

The available literatures on organizations have practical applications on how to successfully apply every organizational component for the achievement of organizational goals in the public sector. One of the most significant factors identified is the strategic implications of trade unions in realization of organizational goals mostly in the public sector. Trade unions are vital assets in the production process of every economy. Positive societal changes all over the world have been attributed to trade unions activities (Okpalibekwe et al, 2015). The growth of trade union in Nigeria was spurred by the Second World War (1939-1945). The war was accompanied by untold hardship to the workers and the general public by way of experiencing acute shortages of vital commodities, unusual increase in prices, stagnant wage structure (Otobo, 1983). These crises forced many workers to take up membership of trade unions which was perceived as the only available association for addressing the existing state of economic quagmire. The agitation of union at that period gave rise to the Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) which was closely followed by the first nationwide strike in 1945, in which 42,000 workers participated (Fajana, 1990). The socio-political awareness of the workers was enhanced enhanced by the war (Okpalibekwe et al, 2015).When the colonial regime in Nigeria declared formal political associations illegal, the drivers of the nationalist movement found their ways as members of the existing trade unions, a move that further consolidated the radical stance of the unions (Okpalibekwe et al, 2015).

An empirical study conducted by Okpalibekwe et al (2015), found that the National Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE) of Idemili North Local Government Council of Anambra State, Nigeria has assisted in the achievement of organizational harmony. The study found that cordial relationship between management and workers has been established through the activities of NULGE, such as the consistent amicable resolution of several

organizational challenges, which have in no small measure contributed to organizational peace and order. The study also observed that NULGE has contributed to employees' commitment to job productivity, and it has through effective use of collective bargaining attain organizational performance. In a similar development, another empirical evidence reveals enhanced productivity, effective service delivery and workers performance due to the involvement of employees in operational decisions of an organization (Katz, Kochan, and Weber, 1985; MacDuffie, 1995; Ichniowski, Shaw, and Prennushi, 1997; Appelbaum, Bailey, Berg, and Kalleberg, 2000; Rubinstein, 2000). The negotiation of trade unions may establish a grievance procedures that create the capacity of workers to be involved in decision making, especially for those who felt unfairly treated by management and for job rules and employment security arrangements that restraints employers' ability to unilaterally hire and fire an employee at will (Appelbaum and Hunter, 2004).

Sometimes organizations need the support and cooperation of trade unions to be able to embark on certain fundamental decisions. This is a common implication of the might of trade unions as examined in this article. For example, a competition from non-union companies led one large company to form strategic alliance with the communication workers of America (CWA). The company desires the union support for favourable legislation and administrative rulings domestically as well as support when it demands approval to participate in a foreign telephone company. The company believed that this approach would enable it compete and grow; the union supported the efforts since they were likely to produce more union jobs (Appelbaum and Hunter, 2004).

Impacts of Trade Unions to the Emergence of Democratic Governance: The Experience of the Arab Spring.

A major responsibility of trade unions and independent associations is the capacity to entrench democratic values in the society, ensure that the public space is open, and create resistance to authoritarian regimes and traditional elite's stranglehold on politics and social institutions. projecting right to freedom of association for the masses, social and economic rights, and the right to protest, which is the most basic of all rights that these associations can secure for the citizenry, irrespective of their mode of operation whether political or professional in nature (Mouawadi, 2021). The Arab region has witnessed a revolutionary trend where a coalition of interest groups mobilized against a totalitarian regime to change it. A case worth mentioning is the action of Sudanese Professional Association (SPA) – the visible and planned effort in the protests that led to the forceful exit of the president of Sudan Al-Bishir from power on 11 April, 2019. This feat was achieved by these civil society organizations due to long period of networking and strategizing among the trade unions as well as several months of diverse protest by the citizenry.

The Sudanese professional Association (SPA) contributions to the December, 2018 revolution has certain similarities to the past professional organizational revolutionary activities and their significant impact to the politics of Sudan. It gives an insight into the contribution of these unions to the October 1964 and April, 1985 revolution in Sudan respectively. On 17 October, 1964, several union organizations jointly mobilized to organize a popular movement against the regime of President Ibrahim Abboud (1958-1964). In related circumstances, a spontaneous popular uprising erupted in March, 1985, which those involved seek an end to the regime of President JoafarNimeiry (1969-1985). Professors at the University of Khartoum

swiftly mobilized for the formation of a union association of lawyers, engineers, money changers, and public insurance employees. They form collaboration with the University Students' Unions, and the Doctors' syndicate, who jointly organized a strike action and marched to the presidential palace. As a result of series of strikes and demonstrations demanding the resignation of the president, the army under the command of Abdel Rahman Swar al-Dahab, declared its allegiance to the protesting masses and that eventually led to the end of the regime of Jaafar Nimeiry's on 6 April 1985 (Agati, Samir and Srour, 2021).

Trade unions and associations are vast in the mobilization against military regimes by adopting political strikes and consecutive strikes civil disobedience and eventual shut down of all economic activity, and paralyzing the entire country. These efforts help the Sudanese in ousting presidents Abboud, Nimeiry and later, al-Bashir (Al-Bathani, 2019). Social media platforms assist union organizations tremendously in reaching their goals. The SPA was the brain behind the social action that was transformed into massive protests and demonstration for about five months until al-Bashir regime was brought to an end (Elshafee, n.d.). The aim of joint mobilization by union was to create a massive consensus regarding professional activities and desires (Assam, 2020, cited in Agati et al, 2021). The SPA movement resisted the implementation of the policy on privatization of the health sectors, the economic policies that has worsened the standard of living, costly drug prices, and the taking for granted freedoms of union and laws of labour (Agati et al, 2021).at the commencement of the revolution, the SPA entered alliances with several other groups, to form the collation of the forces of freedom and change. The SPA was a political coalition comprising social movement spanning across various professional unions (Agati et al, 2021).

The SPA championed the Sudanese revolution of 2018. The SPA called on the citizens to take to the streets of Khartoum and stage a demonstration in order to protest the increase in prices of commodities with a corresponding low salaries and wages, majority of the citizens were hearing of the SPA for the first time. But the masses rather than the political parties heeded the call of SPA for civil protest and they responded appropriately. The SPAFacebook page hosted the largest platform of pro-movement actors. It came up with the demands of the agitators, mapped out protest locations; make provision for medical and other logistical supports to protesters, embarked on information dissemination to protesters and citizens, and take statistics of injuries and deaths and demonstrators. The SPA led a mass demonstration to the presidential palace to hand over a memorandum calling for the resignation of al-Bashir from power. The protest was met with stiff and violence resistance and dispersed. But there was dogged persistence on the part of SPA (Agati et al, 2021).

The various unions within the SPA started their agitation by using certain professional issues, such as low wages poor working conditions as launch pad to further demonstration against the government, and through these issues exposed government witnesses and inability to meet its constitutional obligations. Most unionists were convinced that these issues bothering on failure of the regime would bolster the people's support and cooperation in embarking on streets protests in a bid to overthrow the regime. Therefore, the SPA was the architect of the Sudanese popular movement of December, 2018 (Agati et al, 2018).

In Algeria, the bureaucratic state was forced to negotiate with unions due to the incessant strikes embarked upon by independent unions which sometimes lasted for several days in

critical sectors of the country, such as education, health, and public administration, and which have succeeded paralyzing economic activity nationwide (Djabi, 2021). Most citizens lack the motivation to participate in elections marred by financial corruption. They perceived that elections have lost its effectiveness as an instrument of regime change and the mass protests have become more formidable in their interest articulation of a regime change (Djabi, 2021).The Iraqi intellectuals were encouraged by the Egyptian revolution to embark on streets protest and to transform themselves into social activists, instead of being isolated from the society (Alhammood, 2021). The Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF) whose major mission was to control workers as much as it was to represent them could not stop the mobilization of independent workers in a bid to put an end to Mubarak's regime. Between the period 2000 and 2010, over 2 million, "may be even 4 million Egyptian workers participated in 3,400-4,000 strikes (Agati and Sharkawy, 2021). In Egypt, workers became the most formidable elements of a thriving protest culture in the first decade of the second millennium, as they in no small measure undermined the legitimacy of Hosni Mubarak regime (Agati and Sharkawy, 2021).The economic paralysis caused strikes embarked upon by Egyptian trade unions was the major factor that led to the collapse of Mubarak's regime on 11 February, 2011 (Joel, 2012).

Conclusion

Trade unions are known as labour unions. They play a tremendous role in the peaceful co-existence between workers and managers or business owners (Quain, 2019). Trade unions fill the gap created by ineffectiveness of political parties in carrying out social mobilization against bad governance. Independent professional associations are different from labour unions. They are bodies that advance the labour and economic interests of workers of various sectors of the economy (Mouawad, 2021). Several concepts adopted in the article were defined, such as trade unions, collective bargaining, organization, management and decision making. The theoretical frame works adopted in the study were the social exchange theory and the group theory. The social exchange theory is based on social exchange which involves making provision for benefits that help secure future obligations, and the trust it replicates. The theory is restricted to activities that are based on receiving reward for action performed (Dagunduro and Adenugba, 2021). The group theory argues that the political life consists of interaction and struggle among groups. It is centered on group activities rather than individual activities (Okpalibekwe, 2021).

The strength of trade unions were found to include: proffering solutions to industrial dispute through initiation of collective bargaining, reduction in employees' turn over through the introduction of a conducive working atmosphere, creation of job security for workers, securing higher wages and a better pension benefits for employees, enhancement of employees' job performance, raising grievances on behalf of employees, entrenchment of industrial peace and harmony in the workplace, a veritable instrument of democratization of organizations and authoritarian regimes, and so on. The article concluded with the policy implications of the study/recommendations for more appropriate ways to enhance the performance of trade unions in organizations.

Recommendations

Trade unions should devise the right strategies aimed at enlightening members on the need to be more committed to the advancement of the goals and objectives of the organization,

since trade unions can only achieve their individual and group interests only when the organization succeeds in attainment of its basic goals (Okpalibekwe et al, 2015).

Most organizations have been observed to have imposed a ban on their employees' involvement in union activities. The government should in this regard formulate policies aimed at declaring unionism a legitimate right of all employees.

For more effectiveness of trade unionism, adequate and fair representation of women should be guaranteed since women have been observed to have played significant roles in union activities across the globe.

Trade unions should be well guarded not to be infiltrated by persons of ulterior motives, who might infiltrate the ranks of union leadership and displace the genuine noble goals of trade unions to achieving the petty goals of repressive elites as witnessed in most Third World countries.

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