

AN INVESTIGATION INTO MEMBERSHIP DECLINE IN TRADE UNIONS

IN MALAWI FROM 1994 TO 2014

**MASTER OF ARTS IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS THESIS**

By

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned hereby declare that this Thesis is my own original work which has not been submitted to any other institution for similar purposes. Where other people's work has been used acknowledgements have been made.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this paper to Thokozani Chikweza, Honour Banda and my parents for their continued encouragement throughout the period of study.

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this study is to investigate why national trade union membership has declined in the period 1994 to 2014 in Malawi despite the provision of collective labour rights in the Malawi Labour laws. In particular, the study finds out the factors that contributed to the drastic drop in trade union membership over the period in question. The study period is from January, 2015 through November, 2015. The population of this study is 2045 while sample size is 144. The study involves six trade sectoral wide trade unions drawn from the Private, Parastatal and Government. Data has been collected using questionnaires, interviews and review of documents. The analysis of has been done using Nvivo and content analysis. The study finds that factors such as application of labour problems solutions to nonmembers; lack of trust on union leadership; end of employment relationship; the burden of paying membership fees; lack of knowledge of the benefits of membership; threats from employers; pro-employee legal framework and transparency by management are causes of trade union membership decline. The findings in this study are of great significance in the sense that stakeholders will be able to revitalize trade union membership by addressing the causes of decline.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
LIST OF TABLES.....	xii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	xiii
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
1.1 Background to the Study.....	2
1.2 Problem Statement	5
1.3 Objectives of the Study	9
1.3.1 General Objective	9
1.3.2 Specific Objectives	10
1.4 Rationale of the Study.....	10
1.5 Conclusion	11
CHAPTER TWO	12
LITERATURE REVIEW	12
2.0 Introduction.....	12
2.1 Definition of Concepts.....	12
2.1.1 Trade Union	13
2.1.2 Trade Union Membership	15
2.1.3 Trade Union Density	16

2.1.4 Unitary Perspective	18
2.1.5 Pluralist Perspective	19
2.2 Factors that Affect Trade Union Membership	21
2.2.1 Political Ideology	21
2.2.2 Wages.....	23
2.2.3 Degree of Unemployment.....	24
2.2.4 Globalization.....	24
2.2.5 Labour Laws	25
2.2.6 Lack of Knowledge of the Functions of Trade Unions.....	25
2.2.7 Changing Composition of the Labour Force	26
2.3 The Impact of Declining Membership on Trade Union System.....	27
2.4 The Role of Stakeholders in a Trade Union System.....	30
2.4.1 The Role of the Trade Union in Ensuring a Vibrant Trade Union System.....	30
2.4.2 The Role of the Employer in Ensuring a Vibrant Trade Unionism	32
2.4.3 The Role of the State in Ensuring a Vibrant Trade Unionism	34
2.6 Conclusion	37
CHAPTER THREE	38
METHODOLOGY	38
3.0 Introduction.....	38
3.1 Study Design.....	38
3.2 Study Population.....	38
3.3 Sample Population	39
3.4 Sampling Method.....	39
3.5 Data Collection Methods	40
3.6 Data Analysis Methods	42

3.7 Ethical Considerations	43
3.8 Study Limitations.....	43
3.9 Validity	43
CHAPTER FOUR.....	45
STUDY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	45
4.0 Introduction.....	45
4.1 Demographic Features of the Sample	45
4.2 Reasons for Joining a Trade Union.....	49
4.2.1 Platform for Collective Bargaining.....	50
4.2.2 Source of financial relief.....	51
4.2.3 Free legal advisory services	52
4.2.4 Job security	53
4.2.5 Platform for employee voice.....	54
4.2.6 Expression of social cohesion.....	55
4.2.7 Protection and promotion of social economic interests	56
4.3 Procedures of Joining a Trade Union.....	57
4.3.1 Compulsory Membership.....	58
4.3.2 Filling Membership Application Forms.....	59
4.3.3 Writing an Application Letter	60
4.3.4 Payment of Membership Fee	60
4.4 Causes of Membership Withdrawal.....	61
4.4.1 Application of Labour problems Solutions to Non-members.....	62
4.4.2 Lack of Trust on Leadership	63
4.4.3 End of Employment Relationship.....	63
4.4.4 The Burden of Paying Membership Fee	64

4.4.6 Threats from the Employer	65
4.4.7 Pro-employee Legal Framework.....	66
4.5 Effects of Membership Withdrawal on Actors in Trade Unionism.....	67
4.5.1 Effects of Membership Withdrawal on the Trade Union.....	68
4.5.2 Effects of Membership Withdrawal on the Employer	70
4.5.3 Effects of Membership withdrawal on the Member	72
4.6 Roles of Stakeholders in a Trade Union System	75
4.7 Expectations of Stakeholders in a Trade Union System.....	77
4.8 Conclusion	82
CHAPTER FIVE	84
STUDY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	84
5.0 Introduction.....	84
5.1 Summary of the Study	84
5.2 Recommendations.....	86
5.3 Future Research Areas	87
REFERENCES	88
APPENDICES	95

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Reasons for Joining a Trade Union	49
Figure 2: Procedure for Joining a Trade Union	58
Figure 3: Causes of Membership withdrawal	62
Figure 4: Effects of Membership Withdrawal on a Trade Union	68
Figure 5: Effects of Membership Withdrawal on the Employer.....	70
Figure 6: Effects of Membership Withdrawal on the Member	73
Figure 7: Role of Stakeholders in a Trade Union System	75
Figure 8: Expectations of Stakeholders in a Trade Union System	78

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Participant Highest Education Qualification	47
Table 2: Participant Age	48
Table 3: Participant Affiliation Category	48

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
EFILWC	European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions
GOM	Government of Malawi
MOL	Ministry of Labour
MCTU	Malawi Congress of Trade Unions
NSO	National Statistical Office

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

This chapter lays down the foundation of this study by providing the background, problem statement, objectives and rationale of the study.

In setting the pace, trade unionism is a vital element in formal employment. Trade unions aim at economic, social, mental and moral advancement of the working class, (Modi, Singhal and Umesh, 1995). The strength of a trade union is determined by its membership among other factors. It is expected that the significance of trade unionism should be a driving force to increasing its membership at all levels be it enterprise, sectoral, industry or national. Workers join trade unions either because of the benefits they get or because they are just committed to take part in the work place and societal development agendas. Thus, trade union membership can either be benefit induced or commitment induced. Despite any of these bases for becoming a member of a trade union, the situation in Malawi indicates that membership in trade unions has been dwindling. Unlike in the one party era where membership at national level was at 12%, the democratic era has registered a small membership of about 6%. This implies that membership of trade union system in Malawi has been declining since the dawn of democracy. Suffice to note that the two political atmospheres, namely one party dictatorial era, before 1994 and multiparty democratic era, after

1994, had different industrial relations climates with different impacts on trade union membership. The expectation was that the period 1994-2014 would have experienced more trade union membership than before it. However, the opposite has been true. This is a questionable scenario because the one party regime had restrictions in how trade unions were to operate as opposed to the multiparty era where trade unions are free to operate. As such this study intends to answer the broader question of why membership has sharply declined in paid employment in Malawi since the dawn of democracy. The study will also attempt to look at factors that have been influencing trade union membership decline in the period 1994 to 2014. Last but not least, the study will establish the impact of the declining membership in the Malawi industrial relations system. Lastly, the study intends to explore what stakeholders are doing to ensure that Malawi has a vibrant trade union system.

1.1 Background to the Study

Trade union membership in paid employment at national level in Malawi stood at 6% in the year 2014 against 12% in 1990, just three years before democracy, (NSO, 2014; Dzimbiri 2016:91). The birth of trade unionism in Malawi during the colonial period, more than seventy years ago, would have meant alarming membership in union activities particularly in the democratic era if indeed becoming a member of a trade union was important. Some of the trade unions that existed in the 1940s include the Transport and General Workers Union, the Commercial African Trade Union and the Nyasaland Railways, (Dzimbiri 2016:74).

In Malawi, democracy brought favourable changes to the industrial relations system as opposed to the one party era where for instance the legal environment made it hard

for trade unions to realize their full potential. There were a number of constraints that stiffened trade union movement in Malawi during the one party dictatorial regime era. One such constraint was that as a key policy making body in the Government through the annual convention, the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) influenced industrial relations through compulsory integration with unions, intervention in trade disputes, recruitment of key personnel in organizations, harassment of unionists at workplaces inculcating worker discipline, and public threats against dissent, (Dzimhiri 2016:88). The implication is that during the one party era, the autonomy of trade unions was almost negligible. According to Dzimhiri (2008: 93-99), the one party era prevented freedom of association, despite provision for the same in the Trade Union Act 1958, in a number of ways. Firstly, it is argued that during the one party era, freedom of association could be breached at the discretion of the Registrar of Trade Unions because the Trade Union Act 1958, Section 15(1)(d) provided that the Registrar of Trade Unions could refuse to register a trade union if there was already a sufficiently representative union in the industry where the application for registration originated, (Dzimhiri 2016:110). Secondly, registration of trade unions was overly delayed by the Registrar of Trade Unions, who also made conflicting demands. For instance the registration form demanded a minimum of fifteen workers to sign for an application while the legal requirement was only ten workers, (Dzimhiri 2016:110). Thirdly, the Registrar of Trade Unions restricted trade unions from international affiliation which in Dzimhiri's view was a restriction to freedom of association in itself, (Dzimhiri 2016:112).

The dawn of democracy was a turning point in Malawi's industrial relations particularly in regard to trade unionism. One of the major milestones in the Malawi

industrial relations after changing from one party to multiparty democracy was the change of the Republic of Malawi Constitution so that it fully gives workers in paid employment collective labour rights. The industrial relations system was not only graced with a democratic constitution but also subsequent enactment by the Malawi Parliament of the Labour Relations Act in 1996. The Labour Relations Act 1996 contains provisions for collective labour rights under which members of trade unions are protected from any arbitrary actions by an employer. The Republic of Malawi Constitution and the Malawi Labour Relations Act provide for maximum freedom of association and the right to organize so much so that trade unions can legally operate and take collective actions without any excuses.

As Malawi has experienced a trade union membership decline, the situation is not different in Central and Eastern European countries where in countries such as Bulgaria, Croatia, Moldova, Poland, Romania and Slovenia trade union membership has dropped to an average of 40% from a virtual 100% during the communist regimes, (Fenger 2006: 6).

Research has shown that unions in virtually all developed economies have lost membership in recent decades, but the decline has been especially sharp in Britain where union membership stood at 27 per cent in 2010, compared to 30 per cent in 2000, and 50 per cent in 1980, (Wright 2011:2). This downward trend has been especially pronounced among certain groups of workers, notably manual workers, male workers, younger workers, and those in the private sector, although membership has remained relatively stable among non-manual workers, female workers, public sector workers, and older workers (Bryson and Forth, 2010: 2-5).

At regional level, a study that covered the period 1999-2002, findings revealed that in Zambia, trade union membership declined by 21.6%, (Muneku, 2002). This decline happened in a democratic atmosphere. Dominant contributing factors to the decline in trade union membership in Zambia included retrenchment and deaths of employees. It is against this background that this study intends to investigate why trade union membership is declining in Malawi amid all provisions of collective labour rights. Suffice to appreciate that the variables that cause trade union membership decline in other countries may not necessarily be the same as those in Malawi hence a need to conduct this study.

1.2 Problem Statement

The population of Malawi is about 15.4 million of which 7.8 million (49.3%) constitute an employable age of range 15 to 64, (NSO, 2014). Employment rate is at 79.6 % of which 11% (1,700,000 workers) are in formal paid employment in which the employer is subject to national legislation, income taxation, or to any social protection or employment benefit, (NSO, 2014). Those in paid employment have only 6% (102,000 workers) forming part of the trade union system in Malawi, (NSO, 2014). The expectation for Malawi trade union system was to have more membership in trade union activities because the prevailing wages and conditions of work are less attractive as compared to other countries within the region and beyond. Thus, in places where wages are low and work conditions are poor, workers are motivated to join trade unions so that they can fight collectively for improvement of those wages and conditions of work. For instance in Russia, a study done by Gritsenko (1998:2) found that in the absence of adequate labor conditions and safety measures, lack of social and health insurance and poor living facilities provoked massive workers unrest

and pushed them to active resistance to government policy and inspired organized industrial actions against their employers. The Russian case was a result of the formation of the capitalist government that ensured exploitation of labour in order to maximize profits. Little had the Russian Government knew that the capitalist policies on labour were strong catalysts to a vibrant trade union system.

The declining trade union membership is not only in Malawi but also in other countries beyond Africa. As observed by Ebbinghaus (2002:5) that over the last two decades, trade unions have been facing major difficulties in recruiting members but rather membership has been declining in all but a few European countries (Ebbinghaus and Visser, 2000). Furthermore, trade union membership has been more pronounced in countries outside Europe such as North America, Japan and New Zealand (Golden, Wallenstein and Lange, 1999; Traxler, Blaschke and Kittel, 2001; Visser, 1991). The current employment environment in Malawi allows an employee to join and participate in trade union activities. Unlike the period after 1994, trade unions were not granted maximum rights before. This is echoed by the Malawi Government's Ministry of Labour (2009) who highlights that after independence government policy was to consolidate its political power and to stifle the labour movement and trade union activities as well as meaningful collective bargaining. This resulted in the majority of trade unions to be systematically eliminated, leaving only five in the services, agriculture, transport and building and construction sectors. The five unions that existed prior to democracy had more membership that reflected 12% of the total population in the paid employment in Malawi if compared to the democratic era where there are thirty three (33) registered trade unions with a representative membership of 6% of the total population in paid employment,

(Dzimbiri 2016:91). Thus trade union membership at national level has gone down from 12% to 6% over the past two decades. This indicates a 50% decline in national trade union membership from 1994 to 2014.

The 33 trade unions are affiliated to either of the two federations namely the Malawi Congress of Trade Unions (MCTU) and the Congress of Malawi Trade Unions (COMATU); which brings the total number of trade unions in Malawi to thirty five. The MCTU has 23 affiliates; COMATU has two affiliates while eight trade unions do not belong to any federation.

Suffice to say that on attaining democracy in 1994, the industrial relations system in Malawi took a different direction because collective labour rights were restored. These collective labour rights are now reflected in the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi section 31(2), the Labour Relations Act 1996 section 4 and the Employment Act 2000 section 57(3)(b). In section 31 (2) of the Republic of Malawi Constitution it is provided that all persons shall have the right to form and join trade unions or not to form or join trade unions. A closer examination of this constitutional statute shows that each of the workers in Malawi have the power to decide whether to become a member of a trade union or not. This means that becoming a trade union member remains at the discretion of the employee. The Malawi Labour Relations Act, section 4 reflects the spirit of the Constitution by providing that every person shall have the right to freedom of association, which shall include the freedom to establish and join organizations of his or her choice. Similarly, the Malawi Employment Act 2000, section 57(3) (b) provides immunity to individual employees who are trade union members as they participate in trade union activities.

All these statutes provide conducive environment for existence and growth of trade unions in Malawi. The employment law in Malawi reflects the global standards set by the International Labour Organization (ILO) particularly conventions 87 and 98 on freedom of association and protection of the right to organize and the right to organize and collective bargaining respectively.

Despite these provisions, survey results by the National Statistical Office (2013:23) show that membership in trade unions in paid employment in Malawi is at a meager 6%, (NSO, 2014). In 1993 national membership was at 12%, (Dzimhiri 2016:91) . This shows a remarkable decline by 50% in a period of ten years (1994 to 2014). Surprisingly, the period before 1994 was a one party regime during which trade unions found it hard to operate; (Dzimhiri 2008:77). One of the specific examples of declining membership is the case of Nurses and Midwives Union of Malawi that had a registered membership of 5389 in January, 2009 but in December, 2014 its membership was at 2647, (MCTU, 2014). Another example is that of the University Workers Trade Union that had a membership of 1500 in January, 2009 but its membership has declined to 1085 as of December, 2014.

With this situation at hand, firstly, it implies that only 6% of the paid employment sector in Malawi took part in exercising their rights to organize and bargain collectively by the year 2014. Similarly, the second implication from this scenario is that 94% of the workers in paid employment in Malawi pursued, if at all, industrial related issues individually or through means that are not known but certainly outside trade unions by the year 2014. Thus 94% of workers in paid employment are not

maximizing the opportunity of acting collectively which is a legally protected right in Malawi.

Documentary evidence from Registrar of Trade Unions in Malawi shows that between 1994 and 2014 only 33 trade unions got registered. In the year 2008 and 2009 no new union got registered. Thus in a period of two years none of the many non unionized organizations had interest to start engaging employers collectively under trade unionism. Furthermore, union density in Malawi between 1994 and 2014 stood at 1:13, which implied that out of every 14 employees only 1 was a members of trade union, (Malawi Congress of Trade Unions, 2014).

This posed a lot of questions that needed answers. For instance, one wondered as to why membership in trade unions was declining in a democratic country that provided for collective labour rights instead of attracting more to join? What factors influenced workers to join trade unions? What could be done in order to improve trade union membership in Malawi? What were stakeholders doing to ensure a vibrant trade union system in Malawi? What impact has the declining trade union membership had on the trade union system? The study attempted to answer some of these questions.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

The main objective of this study was to investigate why membership in trade unions had declined in the period 1994 to 2014 in Malawi.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The study had four specific objectives as follows:

1. To determine factors that influence workers in Malawi to join trade unions.
2. To analyze factors that lead workers to withdraw their trade union membership in Malawi.
3. To explore the impact of declining membership on actors in trade unionism in Malawi.
4. To establish what stakeholders are doing to ensure the existence of a vibrant trade unionism

1.4 Rationale of the Study

The need to conduct this study could not be over emphasized due to a number of reasons. First of all, the study unearth the root causes of the declining trade union membership in Malawi in the period 1994 to 2014. The study also helped to add new knowledge to industrial relations in relevant to Malawi and other developing countries that have almost the same operating environment. Lastly, the study tested why some trade union theories that work well in other countries failed to achieve the same results in Malawi. For instance, theory suggests that where wages are low then membership in trade unions increases. The situation is different in Malawi where low membership had been the case particularly between 1994 and 2014 despite workers taking home low wages.

1.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, the author has provided the background to the study. In the first place, the emphasis has been on dwindling trade union membership in Malawi by 50% over a ten year period from 1994 through 2014. Secondly, the author has presented the statement of the problem in which the major question is why has the membership been declining in a period where legal provisions allow the full exercise of collective labour rights unlike the period before 1994 where national trade union membership was at about 11% contrary to 6% in 2014. Thirdly, the chapter has also provided the specific objectives of this study whose main objective was to investigate why membership in trade unions had declined in the period 1994 to 2014 in Malawi. At the very end, this chapter has justified the need for carrying out this study of which the most important one was to find out the root causes of trade union membership in Malawi.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will provide the relevant literature to the study. In the first place, attention is given to definition of concepts such as trade union, trade union membership, trade union density and unitary and pluralist perspectives of a trade unionism. Secondly, this chapter focuses on factors that affect trade union membership. Last but not least, this chapter presents the impact of declining trade union membership on trade union system. Finally, this chapter discloses the roles of stakeholders in ensuring a vibrant trade union system. In this study a trade union system refers to the relationship that exists between the trade union, employer or management and the state.

2.1 Definition of Concepts

There are a number of concepts that have been used in this study. These concepts are trade union, trade union membership, trade union density, unitary and pluralist perspectives of a trade unionism. These concepts will be defined in this section.

2.1.1 Trade Union

Trade union refers to a formal association of workers that promotes the interests of its members through collective action; (Anyango, Obange, Abeka, Ondiek, Odera, Ayugi, 2013:181). Trade union is also defined as a continuous association of wage earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their working lives; (Webbs and Webbs in Dzimbiri, 2008: 5). In Malawi, a trade union is defined as any combination of persons, the principal purposes of which are the representation and promotion of employees' interests and the regulation of relations between employees and employers, and includes a federation of trade unions but not an organization or association that is dominated by an employer or employers' organization; (Malawi Labour Relations Act, 1996). The International Labour Organization defines a trade union as an organization of employees usually associated beyond the confines of one enterprise, established for protecting or improving, through collective action, the economic and social status of its members; (Adebisi, 2011: 2). According to Wilawan (2007), trade unions are entities established by workers and democratically operated in order to represent workers in any company or state enterprise in order to protect worker interests and promote mutually beneficial relationships between employers and workers and actively influence societal and national development.

The five definitions cited above converge on promotion of members' interests as a principal purpose for the formation of a trade union. Broadly, workers join trade unions in order to protect their economic, social and political interests and to satisfy their need for belongingness. The implication is that the voice of a union is given more attention than the direct voice of an individual employee in work related

matters. In this case, one would argue that where a trade union exist, the employer do not individualize any collective action but recognizes that the trade union representatives are just carrying the views of their members. The definitions also touch base on trade unions as influential entities in the development of society and nation as a whole. Thus, trade unions are not only confined to the work place agendas but also play a role in making the lives of their society change for better. According to Napathorn (2011:112), if a trade union is strong and operates according to the philosophy of positive labour relations, members of such labour union will rely on the labour union itself as the agent able to protect their interests. In such a case, employers will be less likely to take advantage of or exploit workers, and any unfair labor practices will be less likely to take place within the enterprise or company.

These trade unions are classified based on membership structure. According to Adebisi (2011), there exist craft unions, industrial unions, general unions and white collar unions. More details about these types of unions are provided by Dzimbiri (2008:7), as explained below.

Firstly, craft unions in pure form are confined to apprentice-served, skilled workers intended to protect and promote a marketable skill. Members of the craft union are highly skilled and are drawn from different industries on the basis of skill type. An example of this type in Malawi is the Building and Construction Union whose members include carpenters, welders and bricklayers among others. Secondly, industrial unions are unions whose membership is drawn from workers that belong to one industry. Industrial unions are completely inclusive in terms of their recruitment that represents a large number of different occupations, (Dzimbiri 2008:7). A good

examples of such a union in Malawi are the Plantation and Agriculture Union and the Textile Garments Union of Malawi.

Thirdly, general unions are unions whose members are drawn from a wide range of industries and attract skills of any type and level. For example the Transport and General Workers Union in Malawi whose membership is not restricted to the transport industry only but also to any other industry that may wish to join.

Lastly, white collar unions are unions whose membership comes from non-manual workers. Examples of this type include the Nurses Union of Malawi and the Teachers Union of Malawi.

2.1.2 Trade Union Membership

A trade union member is a person who self-defines that he or she belongs to a labour union, employee or staff organization or a person who pays his or her dues and is recognized as a member by a union organization; (Visser, 2006). The definition by Visser shows that a worker becomes a trade union member by either registration or subscription. Membership is a core element for a trade union as put by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2010: 2) that union membership validates claims to representation and constitutes the formal base for being recognized as the collective representative of labour interests. Trade union members should realize that trade unions are social organizations of members, by members and for members as such members should voluntarily enroll themselves and see the advantage of being unionized, (Ratnam, 2007:625). In this view, Ratnam

points out that trade union members should be willing to pay the costs of running a union, attend meetings regularly and participate in the discussions and decisions.

In agreement to the tenets above, the Malawi Labour Relations Act (1996) recognizes membership as a key and basic element of a trade union in section 11(2) where it stipulates that any seven or more members of an unregistered trade union, or two or more members of an unregistered employers' organization, may apply to the Registrar for registration in the prescribed form. Thus from the onset, a trade union cannot be recognized until it meets the required minimum number of workers or employers.

In the case of Malawi, for one to become a member of a trade union, the labour laws are not silent. The Republic of Malawi Constitution, section 31(2) provides that all persons shall have the right to form and join trade unions or not to form or join trade unions. The Labour Relations Act 1996 of the Republic of Malawi, section 4 points out that every person shall have the right to freedom of association, which shall include the freedom to establish and join organizations of his or her own choosing. These provisions ensure that membership of trade union is always voluntary and not compulsory.

2.1.3 Trade Union Density

According to Sano and Williamson (2009:480), union density refers to the ratio of union members to possible union members. Thus, union density expresses the rate of actual to potential membership, usually as a percentage. In the view of Sano and Williamson (2009) union density is the best predictor of a labor movement's strength in a particular country. For any one union, potential membership is given by

eligibility criteria, usually defined in the union rulebook or constitution with practices varying massively across unions, occupations, industries, and countries, and they have changed in the course of time, usually widening the definition of those eligible for membership, (Visser 2006:43).

The case study country, Malawi, has 33 registered trade unions and two trade union federations, (Ministry of Labour, 2014). The 33 registered trade unions have a membership of 144,215 against a potential membership of 1912907 giving a union density of 1:13, (Ministry of Labour, 2014). The implication is that out of every 14 workers in paid employment, 1 is a trade union member. At international level, countries such as Bulgaria, Croatia, Moldova, Poland, Romania and Slovenia have had their trade union membership drop to an average of 40% from a virtual 100% during the communist regimes, (Fenger 2006: 6). This scenario is similar to that of Malawi where despite embracing democratic values, trade union membership is lessening. However, despite the remarkable decline in union density in developed economies, research results show that membership levels remain high in industries such as education (52%), public administration (52%), electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply (44%), transport and storage (42%), and human health and social work (41%), (Wright 2011:2). On the contrary, research results have revealed very low densities among workers in accommodation and food services (4%), professional and administrative services (10%), wholesale, retail trade and motor repair (12 %), and information and communication (13%), (Achur, 2011).

In European countries, general unions have experienced large membership losses over the past decade, as did those covering industries such as manufacturing and mining

(where unions had once been strongest), continuing a downward decline that began many years earlier, (Wright 2011:2). Positive membership trends over the past decade were evident among professional unions, notably those covering teachers and health workers, and industry unions representing workers in the civil service, railways, construction and retail, (Nowak, 2009: 134-135).

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2010: 2) has noted that some countries in Europe have recorded an increase in trade union membership along with a decline in union density. This situation implies that many of the new employees in the labour market are not joining trade unions hence widening the gap between union members to that of potential members.

2.1.4 Unitary Perspective

The Unitary perspective considers an organization or society as a unified whole. This perspective is influenced by the work of Talcot Parsons, who was concerned with how order is maintained in society. According to Parsons (1966), society is a unified system whose various parts are interdependent. This interdependence between parts of society produces social order with the view that integration of society is fundamental to promoting social order because of the shared values which people hold, (Sychoit and Klerck, 2000:202). There is thus no conflict or exploitative power relation in society. Power is rather viewed as the property of society as a whole. According to Parsons (1966) “power is a generalized capacity of a social system to get things done in the interests of collective goals”. Similarly, unitarists believe that there is no conflict between management and employees.

Thus, in terms of conflict and harmony, the unitary theory views a work organization as characterized by an integrated and harmonious whole existing for common objectives, values, interests, and a single centre of loyalty and authority, (Burchill 1997:7). In agreement to this, Fajana (2000:17) highlights that the unitary perspective views the organization as pointing towards a single or unified authority and loyalty structure with emphasis under the unitary perspective is placed on common values, interest and objectives.

Unitarists consider conflict as pathological and caused by agitators and troublemakers, misunderstanding or personality clash and that whenever conflict emerges must be removed at all cost in the same way a dentist extracts a decaying tooth before it affects others, (Dzimhiri 2016:18). As Fajana (2000:18) also puts it that with the unitary perspective conflict is viewed as irrational and the sacking of striking workers is preferred to consultation or negotiation. Employers that uphold this perspective are autocratic and they view trade unions as obstructive and unnecessary to the proper management of the enterprise or just as instruments of communication with workers for the achievement of unity and control, (Dzimhiri 2016:18). Under the unitary perspective, trade unions are regarded as an intrusion into the organization from outside, competing with management for the loyalty of employees, (Rose 2008: 9).

2.1.5 Pluralist Perspective

Proponents of this perspective acknowledge diversity in social groups, social interests, values and beliefs that generate conflict at the work place and society as a whole, (Dzimhiri 2016:18-19). This is echoed by Abbot (2006:192) who says typical

of those holding this perception is the view that business organizations are complex social constructions made up of different interest groups in particular management and employees who because of the very nature of the factory system, are seen as invariably subscribing to different values and objectives. On this basis, Abbot (2006) argues that it is also assumed that there will be different sources of authority within an organization, and that the potential for conflict between them will always exist over the organization of work tasks and the allocation of rewards. By recognizing the inevitability of workplace conflict, those holding this perspective tend to regard conflict as necessary for the health of an enterprise as it serves to bring grievances held by workers to the surface. It is also argued that the potential for conflict provides a spur to managers to explore innovative methods for handling it in a way that will produce the best results. Acknowledging the existence of competing sources of authority, most notably in the form of shop stewards or trade unions, is held by pluralists to offer benefits by allowing organizations to deal with industrial relations issues on a collective basis.

In this regard it is argued to not only provide management with the most efficient means for institutionalizing employment rules and minimizing the level of workplace conflict, but to also encourage fairer outcomes by enabling employees to organize and counter-balance the power of managers when negotiating workplace contracts, (Abbot 2006:193). Thus, conflict is considered inevitable at a work place or in society at large. Managers that subscribe to this perspective are democratic as such they use various mechanisms for involving workers in decision making on issues affecting their working lives or those aimed at improving the productivity of the organization, (Dzimbiri 2016:19).

2.2 Factors that Affect Trade Union Membership

A number of factors influence union membership whether in the public or private sector. Thus, workers in private sector services join unions for similar reasons to those in manufacturing and the public sector (Waddington and Whitston in Edwards 2003:221). Some of the factors that influence growth of trade union membership include political ideology, wages, degree of unemployment, globalization, labour laws, lack of knowledge of functions of trade unions and changing composition of the labour force.

2.2.1 Political Ideology

Political ideology has been found as one of the influencing factors for trade union membership. Studies have shown that the role ascribed to the state in industrial relations depends on the ideological bent of the state. For instance, in communist countries, no separate role is envisaged for employers and trade unions; they operate on the basis of party directive and the state plan while in capitalist countries the approach is to allow employers and unions reasonable latitude to determine their own affairs within the framework established by the state, (Bajedo, 2004:2). As such, the role of the capitalist state is described in contemporary textbooks as having a variety of roles and functions which include being legislator, employer, agency of conflict resolution, economic manager and regulator of industrial relations. Common political ideologies include among others conservative, liberalism, right wing, left wing, socialism, democratic, republic, authoritarian, communism, nationalism and federalism. Broadly, some political ideologies accept trade unions while others do not allow trade unions to exist. Those that allow trade unions to exist can be categorized as democratic. On the contrary, those that do not tolerate trade unionism fall under

authoritarian or autocratic category. As such in this section, the study concentrates on comparison of trade union growth in democratic and authoritarian political atmospheres.

In the first place, in democracies, trade unions have the liberty to operate to the best of their capability unlike in authoritarian political atmospheres. In this regard, membership is expected to boom up in democratic environments. For example, in England, when the Labour Party, with democratic ideologies, was in power, membership of trade union was at 12.5 million people unlike in the era of the Conservative Party led by Margaret Thatcher, with authoritarian ideologies, in which membership reduced from 12.5 million to 5.5 million, (Heideker, 2009). Several authors (Brady, 2007; Korpi, 1983; Western, 1995) have found that the presence of left-wing governments positively and significantly impacts union density levels in affluent nations. In Zambia, for three decades after independence in 1964, Zambia's industrial relations were influenced by the one-party, authoritarian state led by Kenneth Kaunda in its attempts to control and incorporate the labour movement within the state machinery by using his massive powers to impose, punish, reward, detain, appoint and dismiss, (Mihyo in Dzimbiri 2005:57)). This resulted in most employees shunning trade unions in Zambia hence a remarkable decline in membership.

While trade union membership is declining in some democracies, the case is different in others. For example, a study by Ebbinghaus and Visser (2000) found that trade union membership in democracies such as Denmark, Sweden and Finland have registered a tremendous growth of 9%, 18% and 18% respectively.

In 2013 there were 14.5 million trade union members in the United States of America., compared with 17.7 million trade union members in 1983. Thus, in three decades, trade union membership in the United States of America (USA) declined by 18.1%. This situation is fascinating because in 1983, the USA was under the republic political atmosphere which in its own right restricts trade union operations but membership was high unlike in 2013 with Democrats in government but with a declined membership just registered in a period of five years, from 2008 to 2013.

2.2.2Wages

Trade union membership grows due to the role trade unions play in ensuring that employers should always consider paying reasonable wages to workers in relation to economic trends. As pointed out by Blanchflower and Bryson (2010: 107) that trade unions continue to play an important role in setting wages, in that a significant wage premium is attached to union membership in both the public and private sectors. One of the purpose of the Malawi Labour Relation Act 1996 (LRA 1996) is to achieve economic justice. The LRA 1996 in its preamble highlights that it is an act to promote sound labour relations through the protection and promotion of freedom of association, the encouragement of effective collective bargaining and the promotion of orderly and expeditious dispute settlement, conducive to social justice and economic development. Through this provision, trade unions in Malawi are able to bargain for a better pay that corresponds to the value of the local currency.

2.2.3 Degree of Unemployment

The level of unemployment in a country is also another determining factor that impact on union membership. In their view, Ebbinghaus and Visser (1999) suggest that the law of supply and demand tips the scales in favour of employers when unemployment is rising so the benefits of union membership are lower than the costs. These researchers found that union density decreased as unemployment increased. Checchi and Visser (2005) also found that union densities decreased when unemployment increased and densities remained at a lower level when workers were resorted into new jobs often not covered by unions. In most countries trade unions offer relatively few services to the unemployed as a result most trade unionists that become unemployed abandon their union membership, (Waddigton, 2005:1). However, Roche and Larragy (1990) note that several authors argue that unemployment is an unstable predictor of union density and only becomes significant with the addition of institutional variables.

2.2.4 Globalization

The overarching hypothesis concerning globalization and union density is that increased globalization will have a negative effect on union membership because employers will have more options for low wage labour and labour unions will have less power due to the threat of outsourcing jobs; (Sano and Williamson 2008:484). A study done by Brady and Wallace (2000) found that in the United States of America, Foreign Direct Investment has a negative influence on unionization rates.

2.2.5 Labour Laws

The legal environment in a country can either positively or negatively influence trade union membership in a country. Some countries and employers do not have trade union friendly laws and policies as such workers fear joining trade unions leading to low membership unlike where the legal environment is so conducive to trade unionism. It has been noted that, growing number of employers are resisting unionization to a greater extent than in the past, (Waddington, 2005:2).

In Malawi, laws governing trade union matters such as the Republic of Malawi Constitution, the Employment Act, and the Labour Relations Act have created a fertile environment for the growth of trade union. The Constitution of the Republic of Malawi section 31(2) and the Labour Relations Act section (4) grant all legal rights for an employee to be a member of a trade union. Additionally, trade union members in Malawi are protected from unfair dismissal due to their participation in union activities as stipulated in section 57 (b) and (c).

2.2.6 Lack of Knowledge of the Functions of Trade Unions

One of the contributing factors to low trade union membership is lack of knowledge of the roles and functions of trade unions. As found by the National Statistical Office (2013:35) in their survey, some workers in Malawi do not know the roles and functions of trade unions. Authors have identified at least six functions of a trade union in pursuit of their member's interest, which if understood may positively influence a worker in paid employment to become a member of a trade union. These roles and functions include economic regulation, job regulation, social change, power regulation and self fulfillment, (Dzimhiri 2008:5).

2.2.7 Changing Composition of the Labour Force

According to Waddington (2005:1), stakeholders in the labour market must know three things. Firstly, employment is shifting from industry, where unionization rates tend to be relatively high, to private sector services, where unionization rates are lower. Secondly, associated with this shift is the growth of atypical forms of employment, employment at small workplaces and new forms of employment relationship. Thirdly, with regard to these developments, trade union movements have to adjust to these developments with the consequence that members are being lost from industry at a higher rate than they are being recruited in private sector services.

It has also been noted that different classes of the work force are responding differently to participation in labour union activities. For instance, Bryson and Forth (2010) notes that in the UK, since 1998, density has continued to fall among men but has remained stable among women. It has also been noted that density has continued to fall among manual workers but has held up reasonably well among non-manuals. Furthermore, density decline has continued among middle-aged workers, but has remained stable among older workers and stayed reasonably flat among younger workers.

In a nut shell, the composition of the labour force has kept changing over time. Thus, there is a general movement of workers from the public industry to the private sector where trade union activities are not intense. In terms of gender, men have been seen to shun trade unions than women workers. Similarly, older workers have shown more interest in trade unions than the middle-aged. In the same vein, more manual workers have been shunning trade unions than non-manual workers.

2.3 The Impact of Declining Membership on Trade Union System

A dwindling trade union membership has impacts on wages, employment growth, financial performance and employment relations climate.

In the first place, on wages, a number of studies have examined the impact of declining union membership on wages, (Blanchflower, 1984; Oswald and Garrett, 1990). These studies indicated that the effect of unions on wages differed across types of worker, with manual workers tending to receive a higher union premium, driven in part by the closed shop. Since then, of course, the closed shop has disappeared, workplace-level union density has declined and it has become increasingly difficult for unions to monopolize the supply of labour to firms (Millward, 2000). The demise of the union sector and attenuation in union bargaining power might have resulted in a lower threat effect on wage setting in the non-union sector. In spite of these developments union threat effects continued to raise the wages of workers in the non-union sector, (Belfield and Heywood, 2001). What is more, union members continue to earn higher wages than non-members controlling for other factors.

In view of the findings above, it is evident that despite the decline in union membership, unions still remain powerful in bargaining for better wages and salaries. It should be noted that in most developed countries, when union members have bargained for the increase in their salaries, non-members do not get the same. Those that are not members fight for their own wage and salary increments.

It should be noted that some researchers have argued that potential members are more individualized than in the past and, thus, less likely to join trade unions, (Waddington,

2008:1). From the study that Waddington did, three things were noted. Firstly, the evidence on the extent of individualization is mixed, but it is clear that potential members are more instrumental than in the past, which means that trade unions have to be seen to deliver 'value for money' if they are to recruit. Secondly, it is apparent that large numbers of potential members feel that they can best deal with their manager directly, rather than rely on a union representative as an intermediary, and thus also remain apart from unions. Thirdly, trade unions are now required to be seen to be targeting individual potential members with a 'package' of services appropriate to the specific needs of that potential member. According to Waddington (2005:3), membership decline may result in less influence within political and bargaining spheres.

Secondly, on employment growth, research has proved that union membership effects on employment growth are ambiguous. In the first place, in some instances, the higher wage costs associated with trade unions have induced employers to substitute capital for labour, such that employment levels are lower in the union and the non-union sector while on the other hand, if unions' ability to capture rents discourages capital investment this may limit capital substitution, (Bryson and Blanchflower, 2008: 7). Similarly, if unions improve productivity, thus enhancing firms' competitiveness, it is conceivable that employment levels and growth will be higher in the union than the non-union sector, (Belfield and Heywood 2008).

On financial performance, unions have been seen to enhance productivity where management are supportive of the union (Freeman and Medoff, 1984) and where they are associated with high-performance management practices, (Bryson, Forth and

Kirby, 2005). Unions also appear to have closed the productivity gap with the non-union sector in the 1980s (Bryson et al., 2005). Nevertheless, the broad consensus is that unions have either a negative or benign effect on labour productivity (Metcalf, 2003; Pencavel, 2003). If unions are generally unable to pay for the union wage premium with better productivity than the non-union sector, this implies that unions may hit company profits. As most trade unions are dependent on contributions from members as their primary source of income, any decline in membership results in a decrease in financial and material resources, (Waddington, 2005:3).

Lastly, on employment relations climate, it is argued that unions may have an adverse effect on managerial perceptions of climate where the bargaining process creates a 'them and us' mentality while on the other hand, some employers value the role performed by unions and view it as a means of achieving more harmonious employment relations, (Kersley, Alpin, Forth, Bryson, Bewley, Dix and Oxenbridge, 2006). However, what is clear now is that if managers thought that union decline would bring about a general improvement in the climate of employment relations they were wrong, (Blanchflower and Bryson, 2008:10).

In a nutshell, empirical data shows that trade union membership has sharply declined in most countries across the global. It has been noted that in advanced economies workers are less likely to become members of trade union than it were two decade ago and that fewer and fewer employers recognize unions for pay bargaining, (Bryson and Blanchflower, 2008: 27). The situation is not different in developing countries where union membership has also been going down for the past two decades. As noted by Visser (2003) that after 1980 union decline became a worldwide phenomenon,

affecting nearly all industrialized nations and most developing countries. Thus, it is worthwhile to learn the impact of this dwindling membership in relation to the basis for the existence of trade unions.

2.4 The Role of Stakeholders in a Trade Union System

There are three major stakeholders in trade unionism namely the trade union, employers and the state. Each of these play significant roles in ensuring a vibrant trade union system.

2.4.1 The Role of the Trade Union in Ensuring a Vibrant Trade Union System

The trade union has a number of roles to play to ensure that trade unionism remain vibrant in Malawi. For trade unions there are issues of image to address and a need to convince potential members that unions are still relevant in the modern world, (Waddington, 2005:2). The first issue is that trade union practices are too formal and old-fashioned as such, they put potential members off, particularly the young. Secondly, trade unions are dominated by middle-aged men hence the need to woo membership from all levels of the working class. Thirdly, in some countries trade unionists are still seen as primarily male and employed in manual occupations. Trade unions must ensure that membership of trade unions spread to females and other occupations where trade unions have not yet been introduced. Last but not one, trade unions should work towards rectifying representative structures and practices that do not allow (or are inappropriate for) the participation of some groups of members. Lastly, trade union leadership should win back the confidence of both members and potential members which is often viewed as being 'out-of-touch' with current workplace realities.

According to Quinn (1993: 2-3), trade unions should play six important roles to ensure a vibrant trade union system. Firstly, representing members fairly and effectively in relation to matters arising within the undertaking or establishment in which they work and which concern employment and conditions of employment. Secondly, participating in negotiation and grievance procedures as provided for in employer/trade union agreements or in accordance with recognized custom and practice in the undertaking or establishment in which they work. Thirdly, co-operating with the management of the undertaking or establishment in ensuring the proper implementation and observance of employer/trade union agreements, the use of agreed dispute and grievance procedures and the avoidance of any action, especially unofficial action, which would be contrary to such agreements or procedures and which would affect the continuity of operations or services. Fourthly, acting in accordance with existing laws and regulations, the rules of the union and good industrial relations practice; liaising with and seeking advice and assistance from the appropriate full-time trade union officials. Fifthly, having regard at all times to the safe and efficient operation of the undertaking or establishment. Lastly, subject to any other arrangements made between an employer and a trade union, employee representatives should conform to the same job performance standards, company rules, disciplinary conditions and other conditions of employment as comparable employees in the undertaking or establishment in which they work.

2.4.2 The Role of the Employer in Ensuring a Vibrant Trade Unionism

The employer does play a number of roles in trade unionism. However, the major roles are recognition of trade union and acceptance of collective bargaining agreements. The first role of the employer is to recognize a trade union. Firstly, an employer recognizes a trade union when it negotiates agreements with employers on pay and other terms and conditions of employment on behalf of a group of workers, (ACAS, 2005:1). While trade union recognition is voluntary in some countries such as the United States, the same is mandatory by law in other countries such as the United Kingdom, (Mason, 2000: 206). According to Dzimbiri (2008:9), employers recognize trade unions based on different perspectives. Among other perspectives include the consultative approach, the constitutional modern approach and the standard modern approach.

Managers that subscribe to the consultative approach, recognize trade unions as tools for achieving organizational goals. Thus, consultative approach managers believe in harmony at the work place, whose attainment can be done through weakening trade unions without the trade unions realizing that they are being used. On the other hand, managers that uphold the constitutional approach to union recognition believe that unions are inevitable tools for collective bargaining. However, in the constitutional approach, managers endeavour to paralyze union activities through use of strict management control. Lastly, in his argument, Dzimbiri (2008:10) points out that managers that recognize trade unions using the standard approach, view unions as the responsibility of operational management and a very important day-to-day activity. They consider unions as partners in the organizational

business as such any diverse interests and goals should be negotiated all the time so that both parties reach a win-win situation.

The second role of an employer is to accept collective bargaining. Collective bargaining is a process of decision-making between parties representing employer and employee interests which implies the negotiation and continuous application of an agreed set of rules to govern the substantive and procedural terms of the employment relationship, (Windmuller, 1987). The ILO Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention (No. 98), 1949 describes collective bargaining as voluntary negotiation between employers or employers' organizations and workers' organizations, with a view to the regulation of terms and conditions of employment by collective agreements. Collective bargaining could also be defined as negotiations relating to terms of employment and conditions of work between an employer, a group of employers or an employers' organization on the one hand, and representative workers' organizations on the other, with a view to reaching agreement, (Silva, 1996:3). According to Silva, there are several essential features of collective bargaining. Firstly, collective bargaining is not equivalent to collective agreements because collective bargaining refers to the process or means, and collective agreements to the possible result, of bargaining. Collective bargaining may not always lead to a collective agreement. Secondly, collective bargaining is a method used by trade unions to improve the terms and conditions of employment of their members. Thirdly, it seeks to restore the unequal bargaining position between employer and employee. Fourthly, where it leads to an agreement, it modifies, rather than replaces, the individual contract of employment, because it does not create the employer-employee relationship. Lastly, collective bargaining is a bipartite process, but in some

developing countries the State plays a role in the form of a conciliator where disagreements occur, or where collective bargaining impinges on government policy. Employers should ensure that where collective bargaining has taken place, all agreements are fulfilled so that unions develop trust and sense of good faith bargaining by the employer. In demonstrating good faith collective bargaining, the employer should be able to share its attitudes towards the employee. Four things are expected in good faith collective bargaining, (Floyd, 2009: 265). First, parties involved should be responsive and communicative with each other. Second, the employment agreement should reflect genuine discussion and negotiation. Third, the employee should have access to appropriate information when the employer is making decisions that may affect his/her job. Lastly, problems that arise should be dealt with in a manner that is consistent with what a reasonable person would do.

2.4.3 The Role of the State in Ensuring a Vibrant Trade Unionism

The state plays a number of roles in ensuring that trade unions remain vibrant. Regulation of labour market through laws and enforcement mechanisms, and, establishing institutions of coordination and consultation in order to ensure economic growth and sustainability are perhaps the two most crucial of roles of the state in industrial relations, (Kocer and Hayter, 2011).

Firstly, in regulating the labour market, the state is involved mainly in the enactment and enforcement of labour and industrial relations legislation, which ensures minimum basic and acceptable standards of employment, condition of work, welfare and security, and the institutional framework for the conduct of industrial relations, (Bajedo 2004:2).

Quite often the state acquires a crucial capacity for influencing industrial relations through minimum wage systems. Most countries have a long tradition of minimum wages, which in some cases were inherited from the colonial period or introduced shortly after the independence (Alby et al 2005). These wage setting schemes are further enhanced by the income policies in some countries, and they proved to be resilient (and perhaps inevitable) enough to survive neoliberal policies and hostility of international agencies (Fashoyin 2010, Fajana 2010:12). However, in most countries minimum wage councils and wage boards system are closely intertwined with the mechanisms of tripartism, that is, representatives of trade unions and employers too are also involved in the determination of wages, (Kocer and Hayter, 2011). The state also provides the basic floor in collective bargaining negotiations. Empirical evidence has shown that this role of the state is quite prominent in some countries. For example, in Kenya collective bargaining agreements are valid only after their compliance with the wage guidelines is certified by the Labour Ministry or in Nigeria it is essentially a criminal offence for an employer to make wage increases that exceed designated percentages (Fashoyin 2010, Fajana 2010). Furthermore, the state regulates incomes through macroeconomic management to achieve high employment and productivity, and to attract investment, maintain low levels of inflation and avoid over-expenditure, (Dzimbiri, 2016: 29).

Finally, in most countries, laws governing employment age are set by the governments. Normally, the state in its statutes provides the entry age into paid employment and the mandatory retirement age. For example, in the case of Malawi, the state has Labour Relations Act, the Employment Act, Health and Safety Act, Compensation Act and the Republic of Malawi Constitution among others as statutes

that some of the statutes that regulates labour issues. The state also issues up dated developments in the labour market. For example, each time the minimum wage is revised, concerned actors are promptly informed. This ensures standard and uniform application of the labour laws in a country.

Secondly, in establishing institutions of coordination and consultation, the state provides the general alternative or mechanism for settling the general terms of employment by non-political means, (Bajedo, 2004). By this, Bajedo argues that the general legal framework provided by the state includes some substantive provisions for universal minimum standards of conditions of employment such as minimum wage, limitation or standardization of daily or weekly working hours, occupational safety and health provisions, anti-discrimination regulations, vacations, and protection against dismissal. All these could be achieved through an effective system of collective bargaining. The second role in establishing institutions of coordination and consultation is that the state effectively retains the potential to control collective bargaining due to statutory recognition protocols because quite often collective bargaining requires some form of authorization by labour ministries, (Kocer and Hayter, 2011). For example, almost in all countries both trade unions and employers' organizations must be officially recognized and registered by the state in order to engage in collective bargaining (Stirling 2011:239). Moreover, in those countries where more than one trade union is allowed in a single workplace labour ministry determines the most representative union and grants bargaining certificates, which can be withdrawn if the representativeness of trade unions is contested, (Kocer and Hayter, 2011).

In some cases, bargaining agreements become binding only after they are officially approved by the ministry of labour, and this approval depends on the compliance of the agreements with technical requirements and, as mentioned above, with policy guidelines, (Kocer and Hayter, 2011). It is also important to note that in some countries officials of labour ministry are required to be present during the bargaining negotiations in order to facilitate agreements, a role which might easily be used in order to influence the dynamics of negotiations (Dioh 2010:16). This implies that states have the ability to regulate, and if necessary steer, collective bargaining. Additionally, the state accordingly provides machinery for intervention and settlement in various cases, particularly in regard to collective disputes, through the appointment of conciliators, arbitrators, and the establishment of industrial relation courts, (Bajedo, 2004). It is thus, the state's mandate and duty to provide conducive institutions to the operation of trade union.

2.6 Conclusion

Chapter two has presented the necessary literature for this study. Firstly, the focus in this was on definitions of the terms trade union, trade union membership and trade union density. The second focus was on how political ideologies of the day affect trade union membership in one way or another. Thirdly, attention was given in this chapter to types of trade unions and theories of understanding trade unions. Fourthly, the chapter has highlighted some of the factors that influence trade union membership in an country at both enterprise and national level. Last but not least, the literature review has also unveiled the impact of declining trade union membership on trade union functions. Lastly, literature on the roles of stakeholders in ensuring a vibrant trade union system in an economy was presented.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents how the research was conducted. In particular, it spells out the study design, study population, sample and sampling methods, data collection methods, data analysis methods, ethical considerations, study limitations and validity.

3.1 Study Design

The study was qualitative in nature. In particular, it was a retrospective-prospective qualitative study design aimed at studying the past and the present in order to predict the future, (Odiya, 2000: 147). The study adopted a more exploratory approach. An exploratory approach is a valuable means of finding out what is happening, to seek new insights, to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light (Robson 2002:59).

3.2 Study Population

The study population consisted of 2045 workers two trade unions from the private sector included Textiles and Garments and Hotels, Food and Catering. There were two trade unions from each sector. The information below shows the population in each of the six organizations involved.

Organization	Population
Teachers Union (Blantyre)	400
Nurses Union (Blantyre)	208
Textiles and Garments (Mapeto)	98
Hotels & Food Processing (Sunbird and Ryalls)	85
Malawi Housing Corporation	650
University Workers	604
Total Population	2045

3.3 Sample Population

From the population of 2045, the study sampled 144 participants as guided by Patton's theory of sample size. According to Patton (1987:163), if the sampled population is more than 1,000 then 7% of such a population should take part in the study in order to achieve a 95% confidence level for purposes of generalization. The 7% encompassed union members, potential members and managers in those unionized organizations. Additionally, the study included the Ministry of Labour and Man Power Development because of its pivotal role in trade union system.

3.4 Sampling Method

The study used purposive sampling technique as such the researcher was enabled to use his judgment in selecting cases with a specific purpose in mind. There were two justifications that had compelled the researcher to use this technique as supported by Neuman (2007:143). Firstly, purposive sampling is used to select unique cases that are especially deemed informative. Secondly, purposive sampling helps to identify particular cases for in-depth investigation. As directed by the objective of this study,

the researcher benefited a lot in using purposive sampling because there was autonomy to choose a case that was aligned to the purpose of this study. This is also echoed by Berg (2001: 32) who argues that researchers who employ purposive sampling use their special knowledge or expertise about some group to select subjects from that represents the target population. The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling, (Patton, 1990: 169).

This technique helped the researcher to incorporate union members, potential union members and persons in managerial positions from the public, parastatal and private sector that had rich information concerning the study. A study done by Waddington and Whitston (in Edwards 2003:221) found that workers in private sector services join unions for similar reasons to those in the public sector. Thus, purposive sampling was useful in this study as it covered views from the public, private and parastatal organizations in Malawi.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

The researcher used interactive interviews, questionnaire and review of available documents in collecting the needed data. The study targeted 12 managers and 12 union leaders for interactive interviews. There were also 40 trade union members that were earmarked for an interactive interview. However, only 5 managers, 4 union leaders and 19 trade union members allowed to be interviewed. The interactive interview was essential because it catered for areas that needed immediate

clarification. For instance, where the question or response from either party appeared to be ambiguous, confusing and vague, there was an instant opportunity to rectify the situation, (Neuman 2007:143). The researcher had an interview guide to ensure logical and consistent flow of data being collected. With interactive interviews, the researcher was able to solicit factors that stakeholders had considered as influential in causing trade union membership to either increase or dwindle over the past two decades. The interactive interviews were also useful in identifying the impact of declining membership on trade union functioning in Malawi.

The questionnaire was very useful to collect data from participants that could not afford an interview with the researcher. The study targeted 80 participants to respond to questionnaires. However, participants that showed interest to respond to a questionnaire were 116 because 36 of these did not allow an interactive interview but preferred the questionnaire. Documentary data was used in order to get evidence of what had been happening on the ground. Documents were targeted in all participating organizations and unions. Thus, with review of official documents, the researcher was able to establish what stakeholders were doing or were about to do to ensure existence of a vibrant trade union system in Malawi. Some documents of interest in this study included minutes of meetings, policies, and terms and conditions of service. The use of documents was important because unlike a speech, documents exist independently beyond the writer and beyond the context of its production (Jary and Jary 1991). Documents served as visible signs of what was officially happening on the ground. Suffice to note that only 20% of participating employers were able to release the necessary documents. The rest argued that documents were sensitive and could not be shared with the researcher.

3.6 Data Analysis Methods

The analysis of the data was done using Nvivo software and content analysis.

Nvivo is a qualitative data analysis software package that allows users to import, sort and analyze rich text and plain text documents, audio files, spread sheets, databases, digital photos, documents, portable document formats, bibliographical data, web pages and social media data. It does not do the intellectual thinking but rather helps to organize data.

Nvivo is a retrieve, code and theory building tool, (Jones, 2007:13). It allows users to replicate all of the abilities of the 'paper and pen' system into the software, and much more. The software utilizes rich text which allows integrated emphasis through colour, font and character style (DeNardo and Levers 2002, 8). Once imported, text can continue to be emphasized through the internal rich text editor for the manipulation of colour, font and character style (Blismas and Dainty 2003, 460).

Additionally, data was also analyzed using the narrative/content analysis approach which is also known as interpretive approach, (Berg, 2001:239). Driven by Neuman(2007:335), the researcher adopted the narrative approach because it provides rich concrete detail and clearly demonstrates the temporal ordering of processes or specific events. Secondly, content analysis captures a high degree of complexity and conveys a nuanced understanding of how particular events or factors mutually affect each other.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The researcher sought consent from the Registrar of Trade Unions in Malawi, Malawi Congress of Trade Unions, Management of particular organizations where the trade union existed and executive leadership of each union before conducting the study. Secondly, participants in the study were accorded total confidentiality by instructing them not to endorse their names on the questionnaire nor any document used in the data collection exercise. In the same line, no name of a participant has been published in this report. The researcher also respected voluntary participation of all subjects. Furthermore, participants were asked to take part in the study at their convenient times to avoid disrupting their official obligations.

3.8 Study Limitations

The first limitation of this study was unwillingness of some authorities to release necessary documents. Another limitation was that most participants preferred questionnaires to interviews. The preference of questionnaires meant that participants had no opportunity to seek clarifications where questions were not understood neither did the researcher find that privilege to make follow up questions where responses were not very clear.

3.9 Validity

Validity refers to the extent to which data collection method or methods accurately measure what they were intended to measure or the extent to which research findings are really about what they profess to be about, (Saunders, 2007:614). The study process and in particular findings are credible because the researcher at all cost did not influence participants to respond in his interest. Thus to ensure valid results, full

autonomy was accorded to respondents to provide responses based on their best knowledge.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has provided the necessary methodology for this study. It has clearly shown that the study is qualitative in nature; data collection is by use of questionnaires, interactive interviews and review of documents. A hybrid approach to data analysis is employed in this study. The researcher has demonstrated that ethical considerations such as seeking consent and ensuring that participants are assured of maximum confidentiality was no option.

CHAPTER FOUR

STUDY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter contains the findings of the study. To begin with, the chapter presents the demographic features of the participants in the study. Secondly, the chapter will present in the first place the reasons for joining a trade union in Malawi. Thirdly, it unearths procedures followed by workers in order to become a trade union member. The fourth presentation in this chapter concerns the causes of membership withdrawal in Malawi. Fifthly, this chapter covers the effects of membership withdrawal on the trade union system in Malawi. Last but not least, this chapter will present the roles that stakeholders have done to ensure a vibrant trade union system in Malawi. Finally, it discloses the stakeholders' expectations in the trade union system.

4.1 Demographic Features of the Sample

The sample was categorized in terms of education qualification, age and affiliation category.

Firstly, in terms of education qualification, the study assumed the highest as Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) while the lowest as Primary School Leaving Certificate of Education (PSLCE). Study results showed that there was no participant that possessed

a PhD representing 0%. The sample had 2 participants with a Master's degree representing 1.39%. The sample had 13 participants, representing 9.03%, that held Bachelor's degrees. The study showed that 34 participants, representing 23.61% held diplomas as their highest education qualification. There were also 7 participants that had professional certificates, representing 4.86%, as their highest qualification. Suffice to have noted that most participants, 62 of them, representing 43.06% held Malawi School Certificate of Education as their highest qualification. The study had 23 participants that held Junior Certificate of Education and 3 participants that possessed MSCE, representing 15.97% and 2.08% respectively.

In view of the education qualification, it is evident that most views are of participants that held MSCE, diplomas and JCE. **Table 1** summaries the education qualifications of the participants.

The second demographic feature of the sample in this study is age. The study had 22 participants, representing 16.18%, whose ages were in the range 18 to 28 years. The study had 79 participants, representing 58.09% of the whole sample that fell in the age range of 29 to 39 years. The age range of 40 to 50 had 29 participants representing 21.32% of the sample. There were only 5 participants, representing 3.68% of the whole sample that belonged to the age range of 51 to 61 years. The last class of age was that of participants with 62 years and above. The study had only 1 participants that had the age of at least 62 representing 0.73% of the entire sample. The summary of the age of the participants is provided in **Table 2**.

The last classification of the sample was based on affiliation at the workplace. Participants were either a Trade union members, Ex-trade union members, Non-members, Union leaders, Management members, Employers, Ministry of Labour Officials or Confederation Officials. Notably, the study had most participants that were trade union members. There were 61 trade union members, representing 45.52% of the sample. The study had 9 Ex-trade union members, representing 6.72% of the sample. Another participating category was that of Non-members who were 31 in total, representing 23.13% of the entire sample. There were 18 Union leaders, representing 13.43% of the sample that took part in the study. Participants that belonged to Management category were 12 in total, representing 8.95% of the whole sample. The categories of Employer, Ministry of Labour Official and Confederation official had 1 participant each, representing 0.75% of the sample. **Table 3** presents the affiliation of the participants.

Table 1: Participant Highest Education Qualification

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
PhD	0	00.00
Master's	2	01.39
Bachelor's	13	09.03
Diploma	34	23.61
Professional Certificate	7	04.86
MSCE	62	43.06
JCE	23	15.97
PLSCE	3	02.08
Total	144	100

Table 2: Participant Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-28	22	16.18
29-39	79	58.09
40-50	29	21.32
51-61	5	03.68
62 above	1	00.73
Total	136	100

Table 3: Participant Affiliation Category

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Trade Union Member	61	45.52
Ex-trade Union Member	9	06.72
Non-member	31	23.13
Union Leader	18	13.43
Management Member	12	08.95
Employer	1	00.75
Ministry of Labour Official	1	00.75
Confederation Official	1	00.75
Total	134	100

4.2 Reasons for Joining a Trade Union

The study found that workers in Malawi join trade unions for seven main reasons which include coordination in problem solving; platform for collective bargaining; free legal advisory services; job security; platform for employee voice; source of financial relief expression of social cohesion and protection and promotion of social economic interests. The pie chart below shows the relative strengths of each of the reasons as provided by respondents.

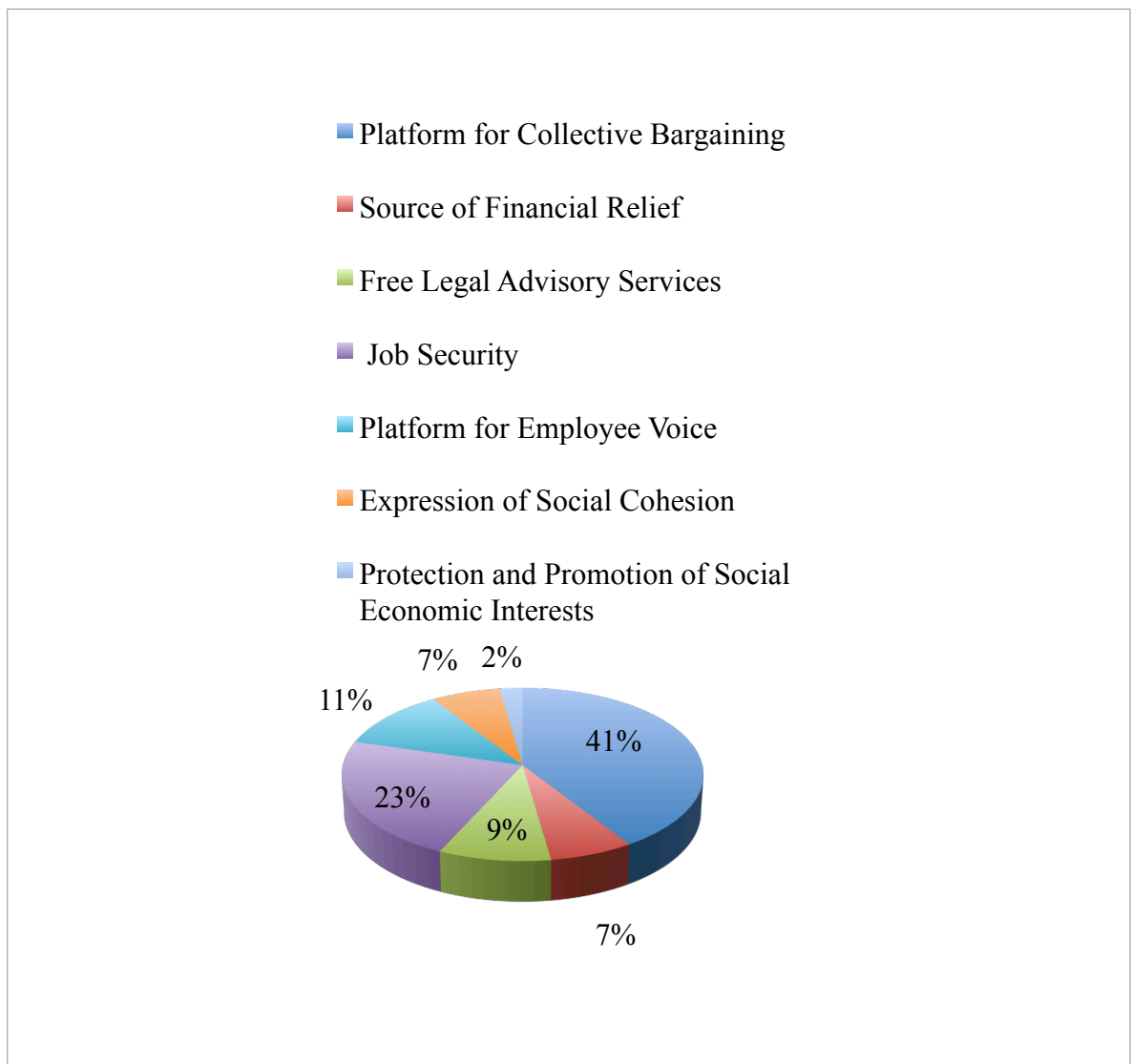


Figure 1: Reasons for Joining a Trade Union

4.2.1 Platform for Collective Bargaining

A good number of respondents pointed out that workers join trade union as a platform for collective bargaining. From the pie chart, it is noted that 41% of respondents join trade union because they are interested in collective bargaining matters. This is of no surprise because issues under the collective bargaining table affect the worker and the community at large immediately and directly. Collective bargaining is a labour right accorded to a trade union in which there is decision-making between the trade union and the employer or its representative in addressing interests raised by either side. Shop stewards and members indicated that bargaining for wage increment and improvement in the terms and conditions of service at individual level has proved difficult and almost impossible. "Many members join trade unions in order to fight for better wages, salaries and conditions of service through collective bargaining as a tool" said one interviewee. This agrees with what (Gritsenko1998:5) found in his Russian study where he found that trade unions protect the right on adequate remuneration of labor without any discrimination and earnings at no less than minimal wage level established by federal law. It also concurs with Dzimbiri (2008:5) who compliments that trade unions maximize the wages and employment of their members within the framework of the contract of employment. According to Dzimbiri, without unions wages in unionized organizations would have been rising but not at the expected levels as is the case under the influence of trade unions. Thus, without trade unions, wages would have remained low because most employers are interested at meeting the minimum wage requirements as provided by the laws of the land. In a questionnaire response a respondent said "workers are driven to join trade union just to ensure they are part of the group that influences the employer to consider adjusting wages and salaries upwards". In agreement to this point another interviewee

said that he joined a trade union to make sure that he fights for the growth of his salary.

From the sentiments above, it is therefore evident that collective bargaining is one common reason that drives workers to join a trade union. Thus, workers in Malawi just like in other countries globally do join trade union in order to collectively bargain for better remuneration and conditions of service.

4.2.2 Source of financial relief

The study found that trade unions are a source of solutions to financial problems that affect individual workers. One good example that stood clear was that the union finances are in some unions used as a revolving fund. In this regard, eligible members are allowed to borrow some amount to sort out personal problems. This takes place at enterprise level in some organizations. The study found that 7% of workers in Malawi join a trade union in order to be bailed out in times of financial hardship. Respondents to this factor pointed out that in times of need, union finances had come to their rescue. The researcher noted that constitutions of unions that practiced this were silent on whether union finances should be used as relief loans to its members. "Small loans are internally arranged on humanitarian grounds", said one union leader. "We receive little wages and fail to save for the future as a result when emergency comes, the union assists a lot financially", lamented a respondent in an interview.

However, what happens in Malawi is the same in Thailand. If the financial status of labour unions in companies and state enterprises is stable, such labor unions are able to achieve many goals and objectives, such as holding several activities in order to

promote their roles and responsibilities, helping members overcome the labour-management relations problems, having enough funds to cover worker livelihood during a strike or lockout in order to ensure successful negotiations with workers, having enough money to pay for legal fees in case that workers are unfairly dismissed and lawsuits become necessary, and providing certain benefits for workers in several occasions such as wedding ceremonies, ordination, and funeral ceremonies among others, (Napathorn 2011: 118).

4.2.3 Free legal advisory services

Legal services are essential to an employee when it comes to pursuit of justice and sound decision making. In this study, 9% of the respondents pointed out that they joined a trade union because they wanted legal advice related to their employment whenever need arises. Interviews showed that paid up members get free legal services when need arises. Each of the unions that participated in this study indicated that they have their own Legal Counsel that they contract out for every legal service that the union requires at any point in time. "Members benefit from this arrangement in that the legal counsels are open not only to the union as an organization but also to individual members" responded a union leader in an interview. Respondents showed more compelled to join a trade union because the free legal advisory services was more rewarding since if hired on commercial basis at individual level, legal services are exorbitantly expensive. Shop stewards are equipped with basic legal knowledge so that they advise their members on the best work place practices.

This is a fascinating finding in that it seems not common as per the literature review covered in this study. Workers in Malawi make decisions to become a trade union

member because they would like to benefit from the union's Legal Counsel. One assumption could be that the workers in Malawi are generally lowly paid and can hardly afford legal representation and counsel when need arises. On this premise, workers are convinced that once they join a trade union, the Legal Counsel of the trade union would offer that free service to individual members. The union Legal Counsels are paid by the union hence a zero financial burden on the individual member.

4.2.4 Job security

Results show that 23% of the respondents mentioned that they join trade union because they want their jobs secured. Trade unions have offered job security to its membership in two main ways. First, most respondents from the private sector argued that they are empowered to take part in industrial actions because the Labour Relation Act protect them from any arbitrary treatment by the employer. Second, unlike nonmembers, trade union members are shielded by the legal framework governing trade union operations in Malawi. As such trade union members find no any problems whenever discussing issues pertaining to their welfare at the work place. “There is no fear when discussing work related matters with the employer or management”, said one respondent from the private sector trade unions.

In a related study, Ebbinghaus and Visser (1999) found that the law of supply and demand tips the scales in favour of employers when unemployment is rising so the benefits of union membership are lower than the costs. These researchers found that union density decreased as unemployment increased.

"Workers want to safe guard their employment in an environment where more people are not in paid employment" a respondent wrote in a questionnaire. In such environments the employer has the liberty to dismiss an employee any time and make the replacement from the wide pool of the unemployed in labour market. Joining a trade union, therefore, prevents the employer from such acts hence a great deal of job security to the member.

Comparatively, Malawian workers just like workers in other countries, choose to be part of a trade union for job security purposes. This finding has proved to hold even in Malawi through this study.

4.2.5Platform for employee voice

The study found that workers join trade union as means to voicing out their work related concerns. The pie chart above shows that 11% of workers in Malawi join trade unions because they want their voice heard. Whenever there is an issue, individual workers find it hard to speak out. "Joining a trade union provides relief to grieved individual workers" a respondent to a questionnaire said. Respondents said that unions are a powerful mouthpiece through which their voices are heard by the employer. According to McCabe and Lewin (1992) employee voice manifests in two folds. First is the expression of complaints or grievances in a work context by employees to management. Second is the participation of employees in decision-making processes of the organization.

The study found that voiceless employees find an opportunity to make a voice to the employer through trade union. Trade union creates an enabling environment for

employees to speak out from their minds. Respondents said that they ensure that their shop stewards are good at communication skills particularly in speaking so that before the employer such eloquent speakers can ably and clearly articulate issues of the union.

Though not very common in other countries, workers in Malawi have proved to join a trade union because they value it as a very effective platform for their voices to be heard.

4.2.6 Expression of social cohesion

Workers join trade union in order to share interests and values deemed beneficial to their work places and the community at large. In this study, 7% of respondents said that workers join trade unions because they just want to be part of a group. One interviewee said that when union members convene, they do not just discuss work related issues but also venture into social matters such as how to promote their good body health. “Union members form a very strong network such that they support each other with high patronage in social events like weddings and funeral ceremonies”, said one union leader. Union membership brings sense of belonging to members.

The notion of social cohesion is supported by Dzimbiri (2008:6) who argues that apart from talking issues related to wages and conditions of employment, trade unions also advocate for a total transformation of society in terms of demands for gender balance at work, security policies for the retired citizens, pensions and gratuity, help to the aged, the creation of nursing homes, to care the elderly and helpless retired officers among other things. In the same vein, a study done in Thailand found that unity among

labour unions members affect the strength of the labour unions, (Napathorn 2011: 118). Through social cohesion, members become committed to the union. According to Napathorn (2011: 118) committed members willingly pay the union's monthly fee and take part in the labour union's activities. They also attend the labour union's annual meeting, participate in electing the union board members in order to show employers and society at large that the labour union is harmonious and cannot be easily threatened.

4.2.7 Protection and promotion of social economic interests

Trade union membership has proved to be beneficial through the protection and promotion of social economic interests. In particular, trade union membership in Malawi has helped its membership from arbitrary treatments by employers. In some cases, unions have protected its membership from has economic conditions by bargaining for wage increments in times of inexpressible inflation. At the verge of incredible rising cost of living, unions have always made their employers to consider improving remunerations of workers. Additionally, unions have influenced improvements in terms and conditions of service where such were obviously pro-employer. This study revealed that 2% of workers in Malawi join trade unions in order to protect and promote social economic interests.

In an interview, one union leader proudly disclosed, "we forced our employer to conduct a job evaluation exercise because we felt poorly remunerated". The study found that after the job evaluation, the union is now satisfied with the rewards that the organization provides to its workers.

In agreement to this, Kambirinya (2008:22) adds that the levels of wages resulting directly or indirectly from collective bargaining is a major input into the economic system and may be significant in determining not only employment levels and production costs but also overall demand in the economy, inflation, balance of payment and economic growth. "The union has protected and made the minimum wage.

4.3 Procedures of Joining a Trade Union

The study found that trade unions follow different procedures for recruiting new members. Variations in procedures of recruiting new members were noticed not only between unions in different sectors but also within a sector. Results of this study revealed that there are four different ways that upon fulfilling either, a worker can become a trade union member in Malawi. These ways include compulsory membership; Filling of membership application forms; writing an application letter and payment of membership fees. The pie chart below shows the strength of each of the procedures.

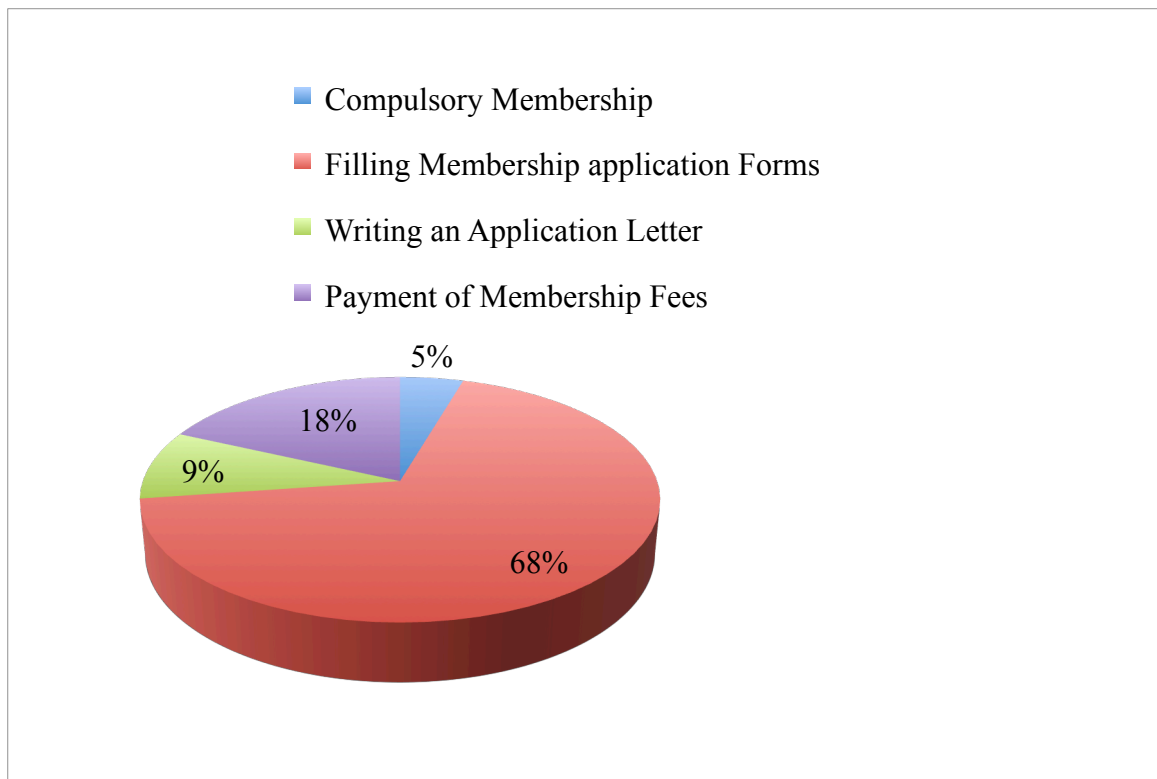


Figure 2: Procedure for Joining a Trade Union

4.3.1 Compulsory Membership

This procedure is practiced where unions consider themselves as “closed shop unions”. It is prevalent in the government and parastatal sectors. The study found that 5% of workers in Malawi are in trade unions by force. "Once a person joins an organization as an employee, they are automatically considered as trade union members", said a trade union leader. In this case, membership fee is deducted at source without the consent of the employee. The new employees discover that they are trade union members through the deductions made at source.

The study noted that compulsory membership contradicts the legal provisions of trade union membership in Malawi. For instance, the Constitution of the Republic of

Malawi in Section 31(2) and the Labour Relations Act section (4) grant all legal rights for an employee to join or not join a trade union. Interviews with some members in closed shop unions indicated that most of them do not know even their constitutions. In such unions, members also lamented of poor communication by shop stewards. The researcher viewed unions that recruit members by virtue of being an employee are democracy deficient.

Unions that practice this method of recruitment are Marxist in nature because they believe that as workers they are the sole providers of labour and must therefore show solidarity in the fight of employer exploitation. For the providers of labour to force employers who are owners of capital, they must speak one voice through a trade union hence the compulsory membership. However, the study found that the compulsory membership has been very successful in one trade union only. "In our trade union, members who were recruited by compulsory ganged up and claimed back the membership fees that were deducted at source", said a union leader. The trade union in question had to pay back the monies that were deducted without the employees' authority.

4.3.2 Filling Membership Application Forms

The most common procedure is that of completing application forms. The pie chart shows that 68% of trade union members are recruited through this method. Prospective members are given the forms to complete. Upon meeting all the requirements, they are admitted into the union as legitimate members. Once a form is filled, the prospective union member agrees or disagrees to the terms and conditions of a particular trade union. The forms are processed by the union secretariat and

thereafter the applicant is notified the results. The study found that this is the most common method of recruiting members in trade unions in Malawi.

Based on the pluralist perspective of understanding industrial relations, this procedure is very democratic since it accords the individual worker to decide whether to join or not join. Trade unions that recruit members using this method are conforming to the freedom of association in which a worker should make an informed decision.

4.3.3 Writing an Application Letter

In some trade unions, joining a trade union passes through some steps. First, a worker who wants to join is asked to write an application letter which is then responded to. Second, the union responds by giving the prospective member the terms and conditions of membership. The third stage involves the member accepting the terms and conditions of membership. Finally, the secretariat admits the worker as a bona fide member into the union. The study found that 9% of workers in Malawi are recruited by writing application letters.

4.3.4 Payment of Membership Fee

Another way of recruiting new members is by simply asking those interested to pay membership fee. Results of the study places this as the second most used procedure of joining a trade union in Malawi. The pie chart reveals that 18% of trade union members became members by simply paying a membership fee. "Once the fee is fully paid, a worker becomes a legitimate trade union member", said an interviewee. In another interview, a shop steward said that the logic behind is that payment of membership fee is an evidence of commitment.

Just like in filling application forms, payment of membership fee is democratic because it awaits an individual worker to make a decision. Trade unions that follow this method do not force workers to pay the fees. Workers are free to decide the mode of payment. Membership comes to an end if the fee has not been paid on expiry of the stipulated period.

4.4 Causes of Membership Withdrawal

Workers in Malawi withdrawal their union membership due to a number of factors. The study found that the major factors that influence workers to withdrawal their union membership are application of labour problems solutions to nonmembers; lack of trust on union leadership; end of employment relationship; the burden of paying membership fees; lack of knowledge of the benefits of membership; threats from employers; pro-employee legal framework and transparency by management. The pie chart below shows the relative strength of each of the causes according to respondents.

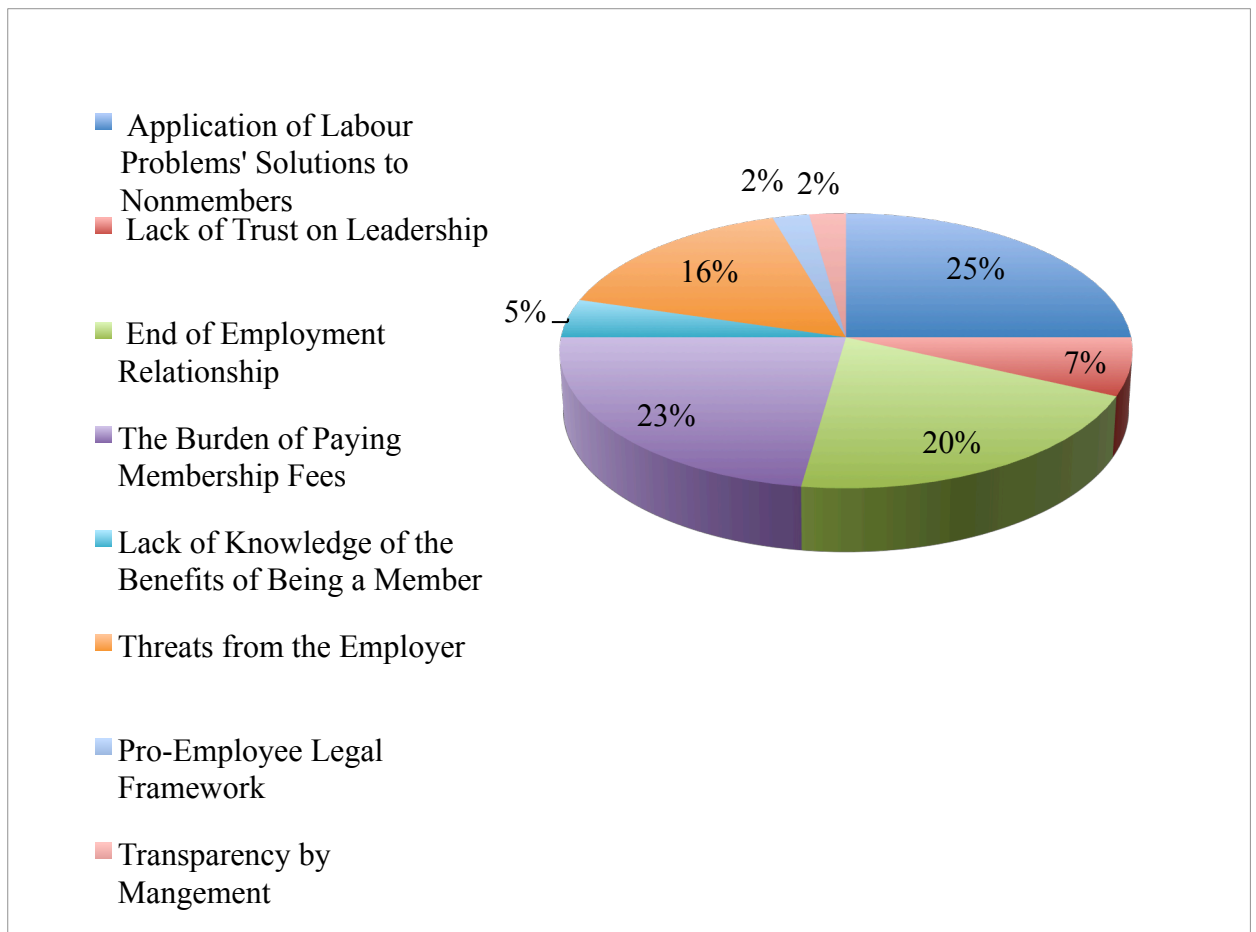


Figure 3: Causes of Membership withdrawal

4.4.1 Application of Labour problems Solutions to Non-members

The study found that 25% of workers in Malawi quit trade unions because they do not see a difference between being a member and not being a member. Respondents pointed out that unions do a good job of influencing improvement of wages and terms and conditions of service for better. However, the challenge is that both members and nonmembers benefit alike. "The enjoyment of benefits by nonmembers such as a negotiated salary increment brings no distinction between a member and a nonmember", lamented one respondent in an interview. On this basis, workers chose to cease being a trade union member.

This factor cuts across all trade unions in Malawi. There is no any legislation in Malawi that guides on what should happen to nonmembers in cases where a union has successfully bargained or negotiated for an improvement in wages or conditions of service.

4.4.2 Lack of Trust on Leadership

The study found that 7% of workers in Malawi quit trade union membership as a result of lack of trust on their leaders. The most outstanding argument was that union leaders compromise their roles because management or the employer provides them with fat allowances whenever they have a meeting to discuss employee concerns. “In most cases, concerns raised by trade union members die naturally”, said one ex-trade union member.

In total agreement to this factor, similar three independent studies found that characteristics of labour union leaders are associated with loyalty among members and the willingness of members to join and work for labour unions, (Kelloway and Barling, 1993; Kurovillla and Fiorito, 1984; Metochi, 2002 in Napathorn 2011: 113). Therefore, this study considers as not common to Malawi only but also to other countries.

4.4.3 End of Employment Relationship

Membership has also been declining particularly at enterprise level due to end of employment relationships as a result of factors like death, resignation, dismissal and retrenchment among others. The study found that 20% of workers in Malawi quit trade union membership due to end of employment relationship. Respondents singled

out retrenchment as the most important factor that drastically affects membership. It was also argued that a large portion of trade union members in Malawi falls in the rank and files level. In times of retrenchment, the rank and files are the worst victims hence membership goes down easily. "We lost a good portion of membership when our employer retrenched in the year 2008", lamented one shop steward. This increases trade union density at both enterprise and national level. Suffice to note that this factor can be both controlled and uncontrolled. Those that can be controlled include resignation, dismissal and retrenchment among others. On the other hand, membership decline due to death of an employee is hardly controllable.

4.4.4 The Burden of Paying Membership Fee

Payment of membership fee is another factor that has caused membership withdrawal in Malawi. The study found that about 23% of workers in Malawi withdrawal their union membership because of the burden of paying membership fees. Review of documents and showed that on average, a trade union member is required to subscribe MK6000 per annum. The fee is mostly deducted at source either at once or in agreed installments. Most respondents that gave this response lamented that wages and salaries in Malawian organizations are largely too low such that a deduction, no matter how small it might be, adds some financial misery to their individual as well as family lives.

While trade unions in other countries comfortably afford payment of membership fees, workers in Malawi struggle to do the same. Trade unions in Malawi cannot afford supporting their members financially during industrial actions as such their exercise of collective labour rights is limited. Workers are afraid of starving their

dependents as such their collective actions are with limits to the extent that they easily give in to the employer's counter offers in a collective bargaining process.

4.4.5 Lack of knowledge of the Benefits of Being a Member

Trade union members expect union membership to be beneficial to them. However, this study found out that 5% of trade union members in Malawi do not know the full benefits of trade union membership. Upon joining a union, some respondent told the researcher that what they expected did not happen. For instance, some wanted to become shop stewards. However, over time, they were never elected into leadership positions for reasons not usually known since elections are mostly done through a secret ballot. Others expected that when they are members of a trade union, whatever they press on management would be heard and given to them. "I quit because it was not useful to me", responded an interviewee.

4.4.6 Threats from the Employer

The study found out that there are clear threats from employers or management to trade union members. Notably, 16% of workers in Malawi relinquish their trade union membership because of threats by the employer. Trade unions let alone their membership are taken as trouble makers in some organizations. Union leaders revealed that their membership faces threats of dismissal particularly in times of industrial actions. Nonmembers are considered innocent. By being a member, employment is put at risk. Employers await for an opportune moment to dislodge from their organizations employees who are trade union members. "Employers put up mechanisms of finding faults in employees just because they are trade union members", said a trade union member. Consequently, the fear of being sacked from

an organization makes employees quit their trade union membership. These employers are typical unitarists who view conflict as irrational and the sacking of striking workers is preferred to consultation or negotiation (Fajana 2000:18). Such employers are autocratic and they view trade unions as obstructive and unnecessary to the proper management of the enterprise or just as instruments of communication with workers for the achievement of unity and control, (Dzimbiri 2008: 2). In her study, Rose (2008:9) argues that unitarists consider trade unions as an intrusion into the organization from outside, competing with management for the loyalty of employees. The study found threats from the employer is one of the common causes of membership decline in Malawi a symbol that a good number of employers in Malawi are unitarists.

4.4.7 Pro-employee Legal Framework

Respondents that provided this factor argued that the Employment Act protects the employer from arbitrary treatment by the employer. Employment relationship cannot just come to an end without a valid reason. The study found that 2% of workers in Malawi quit trade union membership because they feel highly secured and finds no good justification of maintaining their membership with a trade union. One respondent boasted that whenever there is a case in the Court, rarely does the employer win.

4.4.8 Transparency by Management

The study discovered that when management opens up to trade union, employee feel no need to be a trade union member. Whenever there are concerns, such transparent management do not hide any relevant information to its employees. The transparent

management involves union representatives as well as representatives of non union members when making any adjustment in wages, salaries and terms and conditions of service. The general experience is that, in organizations where such management exist, membership withdrawal is high. There is usually proactiveness in approaching issues such that unions rarely fight for anything. The study found that 2% of workers in Malawi relinquish their membership when they notice that the employer or management is very transparent and honest.

This study concludes that while transparency is good to trade unions, it is also an effective way to silence trade unions. However, this works better where negotiations concerns monetary rewards.

4.5 Effects of Membership Withdrawal on Actors in Trade Unionism

The study found out that membership withdrawal has a number of effects on the tradeunion; the employer as well as the member. The trade union loses revenue, credibility and collective bargaining power. The employer loses good reputation, finds it hard to resolveorganizational conflicts, enjoys less resistance from employees, promotes illegal industrial actions and management enjoys less pressure on employee welfare issues. The employee loses representation and a credible platform for voicing concerns.

4.5.1 Effects of Membership Withdrawal on the Trade Union

The pie chart below shows the effects of membership withdrawal on a trade union as provided by respondents.

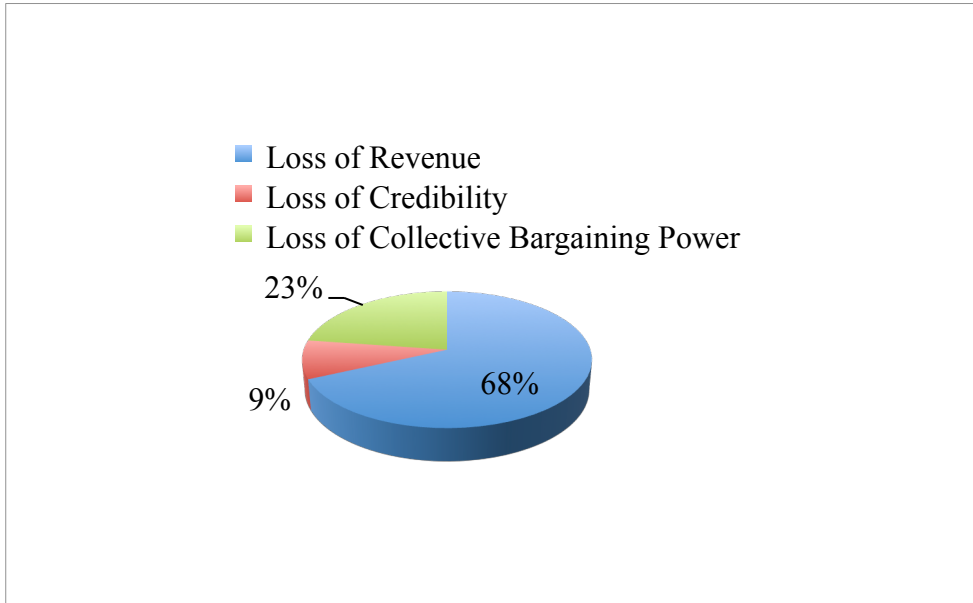


Figure 4: Effects of Membership Withdrawal on a Trade Union

The first effect is loss of revenue. Union membership is the most reliable source of income for the administration and management of a trade union. The study found that 68% of respondents said that when trade union membership declines, the trade union becomes weak financially. Membership withdrawal reduces the financial muscle of a union. Thus, the more the membership, the higher the volume of money that goes into a particular union. This is echoed by Waddington (2005:3) who argues that most trade unions are dependent on contributions from members as their primary source of income hence any decline in membership results in a decrease in financial and material resources. This is also echoed by John Keane (1992) who suggested that the strength of a labour union depends on members regularly paying the annual fee to the labor union.

On this basis, it is the wish of unions to recruit as many members as possible for them to be strong. Responses from some union leaders showed that shop stewards have hardly held meetings due to lack of finances. Some lucky trade unions are supported financially by their employers. However, trade unions that are supported by their employers lamented of unobjectively sympathizing with the employer in times of collective bargaining

The second effect is loss of credibility. Trade unions are stronger with more membership. The study found that 9% of respondents argued that the trustworthiness of a union depend to a large extent on more membership such that when members are relinquishing their membership, nonmembers and other stakeholders lose trust in the union. “The union that is experiencing rampant membership withdrawal has questionable credibility particularly before the employer or management of the organization where it exists”, explained one union member. This is echoed by Nathorn (2011: 112) who says that if the labour union is weakened, employers may take advantage of or exploit workers and at the same time, workers will no longer trust the labour union as the representative of workers.

The third and last effect is loss of collective bargaining power. The study found that Collective bargaining is affected by union membership to some extent. Respondents that highlighted loss of collective bargaining power due to membership withdrawal argued that when a trade union has few members than nonmembers, it becomes hard for the employer to consider the demands of the union. The power of collective bargaining depends on the strength of the union by large membership. Employers put considerable thought on demands made by a large portion of the workforce. From this

study, 23% of the respondents strongly feel that a decline in trade union membership makes the trade union to lose some considerable bargaining power.

4.5.2 Effects of Membership Withdrawal on the Employer

The employer is also affected by trade union membership withdrawal in a number of ways. There are both positive and negative effects of trade union membership withdrawal as provided by respondents in this study. The pie chart below shows how respondents considered the effects.

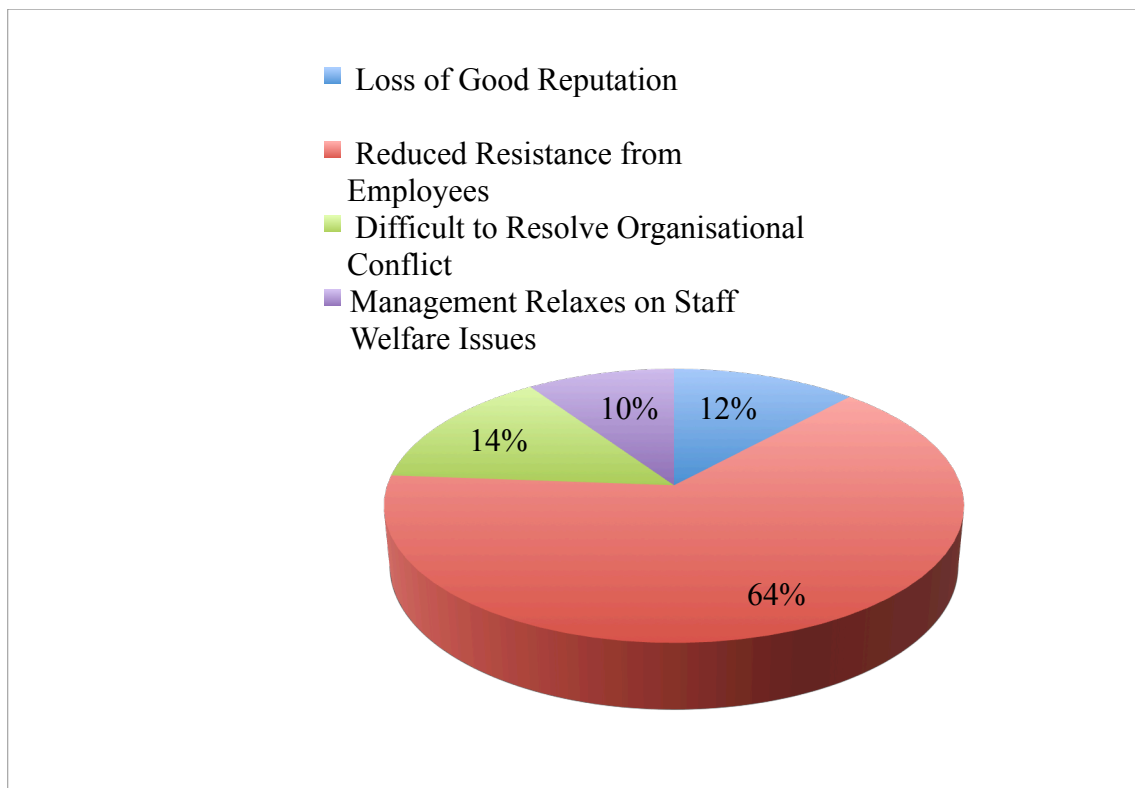


Figure 5: Effects of Membership Withdrawal on the Employer

The first effect on the employer is loss of good reputation. In some organizations, trade union members cease their membership due to the employer's negative attitude

towards the union. Such organizations are perceived to be anti-trade union. The study, found that 11% of workers in Malawi believe that the image of an organization is dented when more people quit union membership. Members of trade union withdrawal their membership because they are afraid of being sacked from employment with no valid reason. This loss of good reputation is very negative on the part of the organization itself.

The second effect is reduced resistance from employees. This is a positive effect on the employer. Employers enjoy when trade union membership is becoming thinner and thinner. The study found that 61% of workers believe that more membership in trade union results in more resistance from employees. As such membership withdrawal is advantageous to the employer for the resistance reducing effect. To the employer, the strength of the trade union is weakened by membership withdrawal. In turn, there is less resistance to decrees made by the employer to its employees. The employer would wish to see a weaker trade union in terms of numbers because that makes the employer to implement decisions with minimal resistance unlike where there are more union members than nonmembers.

The third effect is that it becomes difficult to resolve organizational conflicts. In cases where workers are withdrawing union membership, the employer has a challenge of resolving most complaints and grievances at individual level. This study found that 14% of workers in paid employment are of the view that the employer finds it tough to resolve organizational conflicts when few employees are in a trade union. Respondents argued that unlike union members who channel their grievances through shop stewards, nonmembers present their dissatisfaction to the employer individually. Such

cases are costly in terms of time. Where grievances are presented collectively, resolutions made are binding to all those represented. The employer does not spend most of its energies in resolving conflicts now and again if the large part of its workforce are union members

Fourthly, the study found out that where a union has few membership, the employer or management relaxes on staff welfare issues. The study found that 9% of workers in Malawi are of the view that when an organization has few employees in a trade union, there is, in most cases, relaxation on part of management or the employer in addressing welfare concerns of their workers. Respondents attributed this to lack of unity among workers arguing that when welfare issues are presented to management by a union, the concerns are taken to be from all employees. However, when same issues are presented by individual workers, management usually does not consider such as an outcry of all the employees at the workplace. This is both positive and negative to the employer or management.

4.5.3 Effects of Membership withdrawal on the Member

The study found two effects of membership withdrawal on the member. These are loss of representation and loss of credible tool for voicing concerns. Respondents in this study provided the following relative strength of the effects of membership withdrawal on the member.

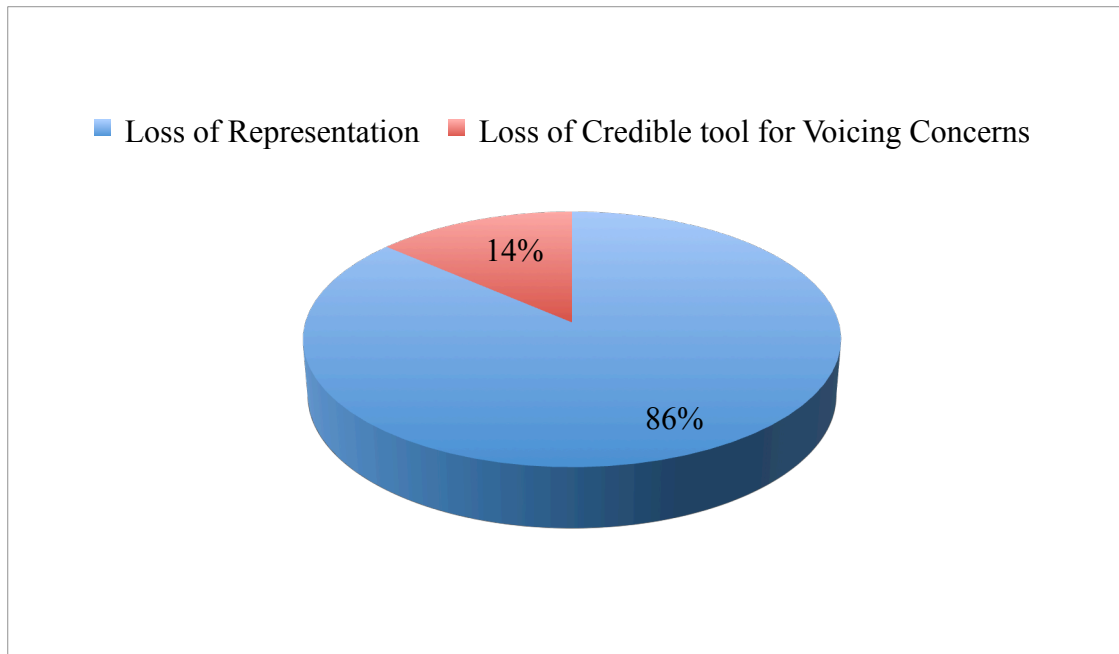


Figure 6: Effects of Membership Withdrawal on the Member

The first effect on the member is loss of representation. This is the major effect on part of the worker who relinquishes their trade union membership. The study found that 86% of respondents were of the view that quitting trade union membership makes the worker to have no representation. The worker that has withdrawn union membership loses representation in decision making forums. In essence, workers who are not members of a trade union are usually not represented where decisions affecting the worker are being made. "The practice is that shop stewards form part of various decision making committees of an organization as such it is hard for nonmembers to be represented because in most cases employers recognize trade unions and appoint shop stewards to be part of decision making teams or committees", explained a respondent. Trade unions help their members to enjoy all the justice they deserve in employment matters. This view is echoed by Napathorn (2011:112) who says that the labour union plays an important role in promoting fairness within an organization.

At disciplinary hearing level, a trade union member is free to get a representation who is usually a shop steward so that they are able to listen to the arguments of the employer and the disciplinary committee. The shop stewards are well trained in employment matters such that they are able to establish facts and present arguments against any injustice. Respondents supported the fact that trade unions are helpful in saving their members from arbitrary treatments and unfair dismissals. Trade unions have legal counsels that also play a big role in ensuring that their clients do not suffer injustice. On this basis, withdrawing of trade union membership places a worker at a high risk of suffering injustice. Suffice to note that most trade union members are of lower income category hence cannot afford private legal representation when need arises. Remaining a trade union member, provides that privilege of enjoying legal representation whose cost the union bears from the pool funds.

The second effect on the member is loss of credible tool for voicing concerns. A trade union is a platform for voicing out work related concerns. The study found that 14% of respondents subscribe to the view that withdrawing trade union renders the worker no credible platform for voicing labour related concerns. "The fact is that being a trade union members offers a worker an opportune channel to present their concerns to the employer through the trade union, said one interviewee". Withdrawal of membership from a trade union implies little or no access to voicing out employee concerns to the employer. A trade union is regarded as a credible and only way workers can collectively bring their concerns to the attention of the employer.

4.6 Roles of Stakeholders in a Trade Union System

The study solicited what stakeholders are doing in order to have a vibrant trade union system in Malawi. There were two expectations that respondents provided namely advocacy and establishing cordial relationship with Government. The pie chart below shows the strength of the two roles as pointed out by respondents.

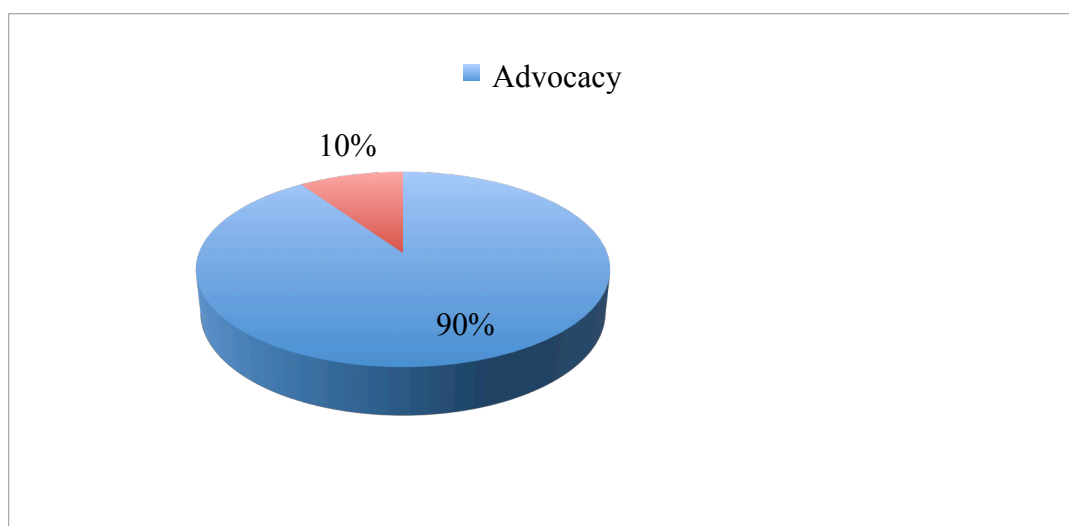


Figure 7: Role of Stakeholders in a Trade Union System

The first role that stakeholders pointed out is advocacy. The most outstanding activity that stakeholders are doing is advocacy. The study found that 90% of trade unions are in advocacy. Through advocacy, stakeholders particularly industry wide unions are generating methods and approaches that should be used to change those policies and practices, attitudes and behaviours that function as obstacles to development of trade unionism in Malawi. Trade unions are doing their best to fight for maximum collective labour rights. Trade unions have put in place methods such as radio programmes to clarify not only to workers but also to the entire community that trade union is not destructive to an organization. In an interview, one union leaders said that most

workers and employers have negative attitude towards trade union as such trade union activists should work tirelessly to change that mind set. Through advocacy, trade union activists are lobbying organizations and institutions to change their unwritten or written rules and regulations that deny people the full collective labour rights.

Advocacy has proved fruitful because trade union leaders and members are now able to support unions through their financial contributions beyond membership fee. Members who are capable to contribute funds as donations to trade unions do so at their will. These funds boosts the operations of the trade unions. Members of trade union ensure that they patronize union meetings. Through these meetings members encourage each other to hold onto unionism and express their solidarity at the workplace. Stakeholders have been doing awareness campaigns through meetings at workplaces and production of brochures. Through these campaigns, workers have come to understand the benefits of being a trade union member. Respondents also said that radio programmes have helped the general public to know that trade unions are not enemies of employers and society but rather business and development partners respectively. Labor unions are entities established by workers and democratically operated in order to represent workers in any company or state enterprise in order to protect worker interests and promote mutually beneficial relationships between employers and workers and they also play an important role in the development of society and the nation as a whole (Tosuwanjinda, 2002; Wilawan, 2007).

The second role that participants pointed out is establishment of cordial relationship with Government. The study found trade unions were creating a good relationship with the government machinery. This response was provided by good number of shop

stewards and their bodies. From the pie chart above, 10% of respondents agreed to this as an important role that unions are doing. They argued that they are always making sure that they be in good terms with the Government of Malawi. One respondent stressed that trade unions and Government must be in cordial relationships because they are economic partners. Trade unions can influence the growth of the economy by encouraging its members to work hard and never be involved in illegal industrial actions. A good relationship with Government would help trade unions to have their agenda put on the Government table. It is Government that takes such agenda to parliament for consideration of enacting new labour laws or amendment of any laws that need be. In fact Kocer and Hayter (2011) says that the state has two most crucial roles in industrial relations which include regulation of labour market through laws and enforcement mechanisms; and establishing institutions of coordination and consultation in order to ensure economic growth and sustainability. It is Government that sets minimum wage. A cordial relationship with Government would help unions to advance their proposed minimum wage and favourable policies.

4.7 Expectations of Stakeholders in a Trade Union System

Stakeholders in trade unionism have expectations from their counterparts and other parties. This study found the following views on what stakeholders expect from their fellow stakeholders.

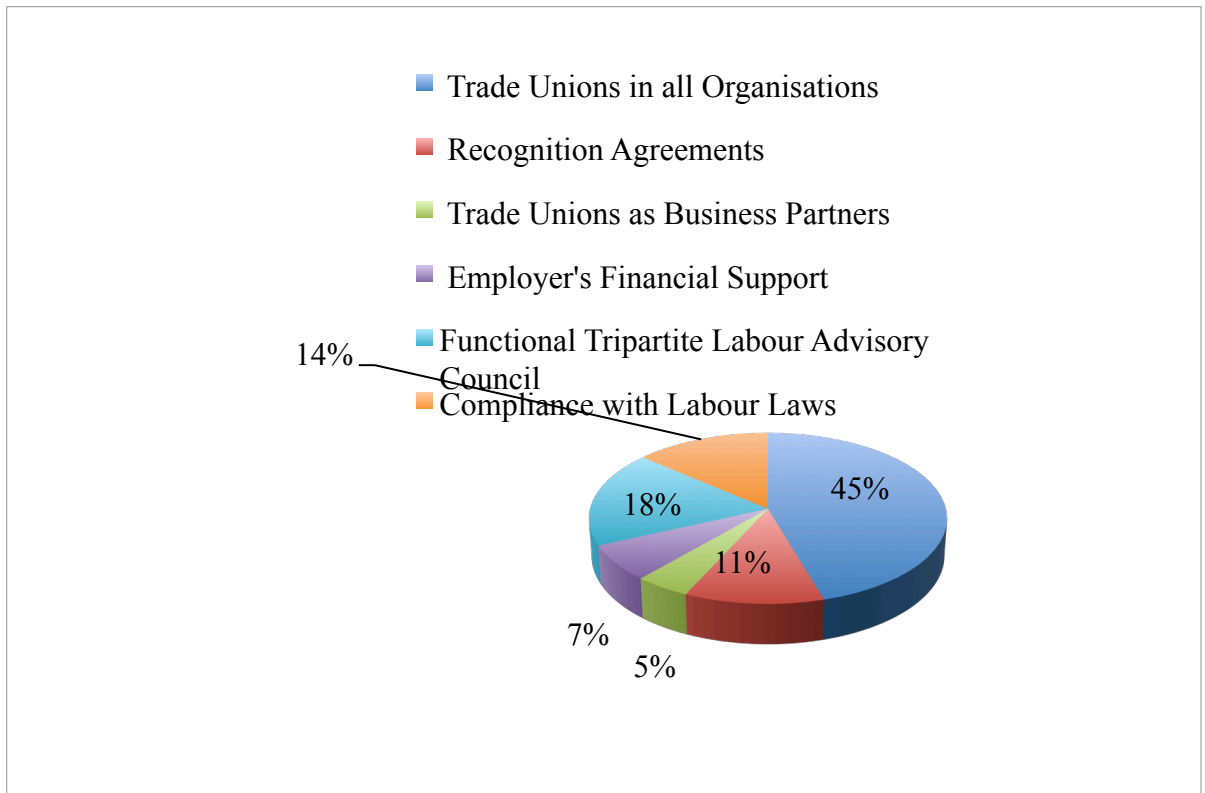


Figure 8: Expectations of Stakeholders in a Trade Union System

The first expectation is that organizations should accept existence of trade unions in their workplaces. Trade unions particularly at industry level lamented the absence of trade unions in numerous organizations in Malawi. The pie chart above shows that 45% of respondents would like to see introduction and establishment of trade unions in all organizations in Malawi. There are more nonunionized than unionized organizations in Malawi. Respondents recommended that Government should make a deliberate policy to have trade unions exist in all workplaces except those in security such as the defense force, police and prison services. It was noted that one trade union mother body tried its best to introduce unions in some work places but the resistance from employers/management has been very high. There are even some organizations

whose management have declared that trade unions are not needed in their organizations despite workers' effort and willingness to form a trade union. For the private sector, workers are intimidated that if they form a trade union, then they will be considered deviant to the employer hence risks termination of employment relationship.

In the Government teaching sector, respondents proposed formation of two independent trade unions. One for the primary school teachers while the other for the secondary school teachers. The argument of the proponents of this move was that if this happens there would be more membership for both unlike at the moment where more teachers do not belong to a trade union. It was noted that there are indeed more companies in the private sector where unions are not existing or denied existence by the employer or management.

The second expectation is that unionized organizations should have a recognition agreement. The study found that 11% of respondents observed that very few trade unions have signed recognition agreements. In other organizations, recognition agreements were drafted many years ago but the employers do not show interest to sign it. In some organizations, trade unions are not aware of what a recognition agreement is all about and its benefits. Shop stewards for sector wide trade unions expect that at the birth of a trade union, there must be a recognition agreement signed for purposes of regulating the relationship between the trade union and the employer in all matters concerning the two parties.

The third expectation is that trade unions should be considered as business partners. Trade unions and their leaders bemoaned that employers do not consider unions as business partners but as useless agents of employees, who wants to either minimize the profits or paralyze the services of the companies. The study had 5% of the respondents who suggested that employers should consider trade unions as business partners. On this basis, trade unions and their leaders expect employers in Malawi to incorporate unions as useful business partners in which the unions will be able to recommend the best practices for adoption by organizations. The study found that out of the participating organizations in this study, only two organizations had been considering unions as business partner. As business partners, trade unions are able to understand the core business of the organization. As business partners, trade unions are intentionally given an opportunity to contribute towards decisions of the company. Reasonable collective bargaining characterizes trade unions whose employers consider them as business partners.

The fourth expectation is that of employer's financial support. Trade unions expect employers to be supporting them financially. Results show that 7% of respondents expect employers to be supporting their trade unions financially. The expectation is that in their annual budgets, employers should include a portion for their trade unions. This would likely boost operations of unions in Malawi. The thinking is that most union members are in rank and files level hence contribute inadequately to the union due to low salaries.

This expectation has a challenge in that most employers do not wish to have a trade union in their organizations. Financial support to unions may likely be considered as a cost to the organization.

The fifth expectation is that stakeholders would want to see a functional Tripartite Advisory Council. The study found that 18% of respondents expect Government to seriously revitalize the Tripartite Labour Advisory Council which is established by the Labour Relations Act 1996 in Section 55. The Tripartite Labour Advisory Council has two primary functions. The first is to advise the Minister of Labour on all issues relating to labour and employment, including the promotion of collective bargaining, the labour market, human resources development and the review of the operation and enforcement of the Labour Relations Act and any other Acts relating to employment. Secondly, the Tripartite Labour Advisory Council is established in order to advise the Minister of Labour with respect to matters concerning the activities of the International Labour Organization. Respondents reported that they have no evidence that this council exists in Malawi. “If the council in question exists then it is inactive”, lamented one interviewee.

The sixth and last expectation is that stakeholders should comply with the labour laws. Trade unions expect that employers and Government should adhere to any prevailing labour laws and policies regarding trade unionism in Malawi. The study found that 14% of respondents were of the view that employers and government do not respect the available legal frameworks that regulate trade unionism. Shop stewards had expressed concern over employers’ tendency of not observing policies that themselves put in place. “The policy documents are just but on paper and most employers never

live to them,” a shop steward responded in an interview. If trade unionism is to be vibrant in Malawi, then stakeholders should strictly be bound by the policies or laws guiding the operations of trade unions. Thus the rule of law must reign for the Malawi trade union system to be vibrant.

4.8 Conclusion

In a nut shell, this chapter has presented a thorough discussion of the findings of the study. Firstly, the study found that in Malawi workers join trade union because of seven main reasons which are coordination in problem solving; platform for collective bargaining; free legal advisory services; job security; platform for employee voice; expression of social cohesion and protection and promotion of social economic interests. Secondly, the study found that trade unions in Malawi recruit new members differently. However, the most dominant ways are compulsory membership; filling of membership application forms; writing an application letter and payment of membership fees. Thirdly, the study found that workers withdrawal their membership from trade unions due to application of labour problems solutions to nonmembers; lack of trust on union leadership; end of employment relationship; the burden of paying membership fees; lack of knowledge of the benefits of membership; threats from employers; pro-employee legal framework and transparency by management.

The fourth focus of this chapter was on how membership withdrawal from trade union affect the trade union, the employer and the member themselves. Finally, the chapter has presented the roles and expectations of stakeholders in ensuring a vibrant trade union system in Malawi. On a comparative basis with the literature review covered in this study, it has been found that factors such as globalization, political ideology and

changing composition of the labour force have not influenced workers in Malawi to either join or withdrawal their trade union membership. However, it is important to note that the study did not include all organizations in Malawi hence the conclusion on how these three factors affect trade union membership in Malawi is very true to the participating organizations and trade unions but limited to the undoubted generalization at national level in Malawi.

CHAPTER FIVE

STUDY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the study, recommendations and areas of future research based on the findings.

5.1 Summary of the Study

The study was done in order to investigate why membership in trade unions had declined in the period 1994 to 2014 in Malawi. From the findings, trade union membership has dwindled due to challenges revolving around the legal framework, leadership style of stewards, employer behavior and membership requirements.

Firstly, the legal frameworks at national and enterprise level have contributed a lot to the decline. At national level, the law is silent on what to be done to non-trade union members when implementing collectively bargained fruits. For instance, if a trade union has successfully bargained for a salary increment, non-members benefit alike. This is a setback that has led many workers relinquishing their trade union membership. The researcher views this as a serious anomaly that should be worked out. There should be a difference between members of a trade union and non-members when it comes to enjoying the benefits of a collective bargaining. For instance, if a wage has been increased as a product of collective bargaining, nonmembers could be

paying a certain fee towards the union in order to benefit alike or the salaries of members should increase while those of non-members remain unchanged.

Secondly, it is evident that employer behavior such as threats have driven many workers to pull out their trade union membership. In a quest to safe guard employment, workers have resorted to quit trade unions. It is noted that the employer has to a large extent not helped trade union membership to grow. Employers need to embrace trade unionism at all cost. Ushering threats to employees who are union members create an intrinsic hostile environment in the employee and eventually affects performance negatively.

Thirdly, this study has established that membership requirements have played a big part in dwindling of trade union membership. Most workers in Malawi get the minimum wage from which membership fee has to be deducted. The workers complain of having inadequate financial muscle to meet their individual and family needs and eventually resorts to relinquishing their trade union membership to save a little cash for their daily living. In this regard, the Government of the Republic of Malawi should intervene to set a reasonable minimum wage that would allow most employees afford subscribing to unions. In the same vein, trade unions in Malawi should consider other ways of generating resources in addition to membership fees. Such other ways would reduce the burden on the employees who are in receipt of a peanut salary.

The last important cause of membership declined established by this study is leadership challenges in shop stewards. The shop stewards are perceived to be

corruptible hence not advancing the agenda of unionism. The loyalty to employers displayed by some stewards is a worrisome development as it diverts the trade union from its core functions. Trade union members feel that their leaders are given some token from the employer as such they are unable to truly represent the union membership.

5.2Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends a number of things. Firstly, the Labour Relations Act should be amended so that it provides for what should be done to none trade union members who enjoy the fruits of trade unionism in Malawi. Once such clauses are enshrined in the Labour Relations Act, many workers will become members of a trade union hence narrowing the trade union density at both enterprise and national levels. Employers should cascade the provisions of the to be revised Labour Relations Act into their terms and conditions of service.

The second recommendation is that the trade union mother and sub-mother bodies should encourage enterprise unions to embrace democratic procedures of recruiting members. The researcher noted with concern that some trade unions recruit their members by force. A worker should make an informed free choice of either joining or not joining a trade union.

The third recommendation is that the Ministry of Labour who is the Registrar of trade unions should be conducting trade union audits to verify if the unions are meeting the operational and administrative requirements. For instance, it is worrisome to find out that some trade unions recruit members by force. It is also pathetic to note that a good

number of employers deny workers collective labour rights. The Ministry can notice these challenges if audits are done regularly.

Lastly, the researcher recommends that interested stakeholders should seriously venture into advocacy of trade unionism in Malawi. The study has noted that most workers and some employers are not aware of the benefits of a trade union. Government should take a leading role in advocating for trade unionism in Malawi. Advocacy will change the mindsets of stakeholders towards liking trade unionism.

5.3Future Research Areas

Based on the findings of this study, there is need to research more on two areas. First, the extent to which trade unions in Malawi are democratic particularly in organizations where membership is compulsory. Secondly, there is need to conduct a comparative study of employee welfare in organizations that have trade unions and those that do not have. In future, a study on the extent to which trade unions are independent in Malawi is necessary considering that they cannot go on an industrial action such as a strike without relying on the employer financially.

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APPENDICES



Chancellor College

Department of Political and Administrative Studies

QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is Gregory E.K. Banda, a postgraduate student at the University of Malawi-Chancellor College. I am pursuing a Master of Arts in Human Resource and Industrial Relations. As a requirement, postgraduate students are tasked to produce a thesis in their area of specialization. My interest is in industrial relations, particularly trade union systems.

The information provided in this questionnaire shall be used purely for academic purposes. As a participant in this study, you are not supposed to write your name or any form of identity on this questionnaire. Neither should the identity of your organization be disclosed in this questionnaire. The researcher hereby pledges to uphold maximum confidentiality to any informant by among other things not writing the names of individuals nor organizations from which the data was provided. You are

therefore requested to provide information that will reflect the truth on the ground to the questions below.

SECTION 1: Individual Information

(i). Respondent Category (*tick appropriate*)

- ☐ Trade Union Member ☐ Ex-trade union member ☐ Nonmember ☐ Union Leader
- ☐ Management member ☐ Employee ☐ Ministry of Labour Official ☐
- Confederation Official ☐ Others (Specify).....

(ii). Education (tick appropriate)

- ☐ PhD ☐ Master's ☐ Bachelor's ☐ Diploma ☐ MSCE ☐ JCE ☐ Others

(iii). AGE (tick appropriate)

- ☐ 18-28 ☐ 29-39 ☐ 40-50 ☐ 51-61 ☐ 62 above

SECTION 2: Questions

Part A: Membership Growth

1. (a). Why do workers join trade unions in Malawi?

(b) what procedure do workers in your organization follow to become a trade union member?

Part B: Membership Decline

2. What do you consider as causes of membership withdrawal from trade unions in Malawi?

3. How are each of the following affected when a worker withdraws membership from a trade union?

(a) the trade union

(b). the employer

(c).the member himself/herself

Part C: Role of Stakeholders

4.(a). As a stake holder, what actions have you taken to ensure that trade unionism does not die in Malawi?

(b). what do you think other stakeholders should do in order for trade unions to remain functional in Malawi?

Thank you for responding to this questionnaire