



An exploration into effective collective bargaining: A case study of public service trade unions in Zambia

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to explore how Public Service trade unions can effectively bargain for terms and conditions of service for employees in Zambia. The objectives of the study included to investigate the factors affecting the bargaining power of the Public Service Unions in Zambia and to propose guidelines that can improve the Collective Bargaining process between Government and Public Service Unions. The qualitative design was used in this study. The study used purposeful and stratified random sampling to select participants. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews and was analyzed using the *in vivo* Software to enable the researcher conduct thematic content analysis of interview transcripts. The study identified major challenges that weaken the bargaining power of unions, such as the multiplicity of unions leading to fragmentation, lack of capacity and skills among union leaders, and political interference and corruption that shift focus away from employee welfare. The study conclusively revealed that unions' lack of coordination and professionalism in managing the collective bargaining process undermined their influence and limited their capacity to secure tangible gains for their members. These persistent issues reflected the broader ineffectiveness of Public Service Unions in navigating government constraints and regulatory challenges, leaving workers' demands largely unmet. Based on the study findings, it is recommended that the Industrial and Labour Relations Act Cap 269 of the Laws of Zambia should be amended to provide clear guidelines for collective bargaining and prevent multiplicity of trade unions. Further, Trade Unions should invest in capacity building of the union leaders to improve their negotiation skills among others.

Keywords: Collective bargaining, trade unions, public service, negotiation

Introduction

A trade union is an organization of workers that have banded together to achieve common goals in key areas, such as working conditions. A trade union leadership bargains with the employer on behalf of its members on terms and conditions of employment. This may include negotiation of wages, work rules, complaint procedures, rules governing hiring, firing and promotion of workers, benefits, workplace safety and policies. The agreements negotiated by the union leaders are binding on the entire membership and the employer and, in some cases, on other non-member workers (Barockdoff, 2022).

In Zambia, Government negotiates with Public Service Unions representing respective sectors. The Unions constitutes bargaining teams which sit on the negotiating table to determine the terms and conditions of service for Public Service employees. The Emoluments Commissions Act No.1 of 2022 ^[11] mandates the Commission to set parameters within which the negotiations between Government and the Public Service Unions must be conducted. The Unions and Government Bargaining Team meet to negotiate within the parameters set by the Emoluments Commissions. In this regard, it is perceived that Government sets the terms and conditions of service before bargaining with the Unions and the parties do not negotiate with an open mind.

According to Mulenga (2011), Public Sector Unions in Zambia play an important role of presenting the interests of public sector employees and ensuring that their rights and welfare are protected. The two prominent public sector unions, the Civil Servants and Allied Workers Union of Zambia (CSAWUZ) and the National Union of Public Service and Allied Workers (NUPSW), have been actively

involved in advocating for the rights of public sector workers. Both CSAWUZ and NUPSW share common objective of safeguarding the rights and welfare of public sector employees. Workers in Zambia have however, encountered issues such as poor salaries, illegal terminations, lack of a conducive working environment, lack of equality, and even unpaid overtime and Trade unions have been on their backs in resolving these challenges. However, unmet demands, lack of information and poor communication between union leaders and employees lead to most of the workers not being happy with the outcome of the collective bargaining process (Madimutsa, 2016). As a result, there is a need to investigate the ability of the Public Service unions to effectively bargain for terms and conditions of service for the employees in Zambia.

Statement of the Problems

Trade unions enhance employees' terms of service through monitoring and collective voice. Notwithstanding the positives that trade unions bring with them, the membership of Public Sector Unions in Zambia had reduced drastically between 2012 and 2019 despite more being employed during the same period. For example, the membership of Civil Servant and Allied Workers Union of Zambia (CSAWUZ) declined from 65,000 to 17,000. During the same period, National Union of Public Service Workers (NUPSW) declined from 34,000 to 13,000 members among others (Koyi, 2022) ^[12]. The decline in membership is in spite of efforts by the Zambian Government and the unions' leadership to strengthen the labour movement. The decline in membership is also in spite of attempts by Public Sector unions to change their structures so as to diversify the

membership. In addition, despite public sector unions in Zambia representing workers who play an important role in the implementation of public policies, they have challenges when it comes to bargaining for wages that are equal to the basic needs basket (Koyi, 2022) ^[12]. On the other hand, Simuyaba (2020) found that many unionized employees have had stiff penalties meted on them including having their services terminated while some have stagnated on same positions for a long time. Therefore, few employees are interested in joining the unions across the Public Service. In this regard, the numbers for unionised workers will continue to reduce and the conditions of service will remain bad if measures are not put into effect. This study will, therefore, try to unearth what could be the underlying reason for this trend. In particular, the study will explore how trade unions can effectively bargain for the terms and conditions of service for Public Service employees in Zambia. This knowledge might help trade unions to strengthen their negotiation strategies thereby securing improved conditions of service for Public Service employees.

Purpose of the study

To explore how trade unions can effectively bargain for terms and conditions of service for Public Service employees in Zambia.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were to; establish the roles played by trade unions in determining conditions of service for the employees, investigate the factors affecting the bargaining power of the Public Service Unions in Zambia, and propose guidelines that can improve the Collective Bargaining process between Government and Public Service Unions.

Theoretical Framework

The study was informed by the Standard Economic Theory. The early eighteenth-century economists Gabriel Cramer (1728) and Daniel Bernoulli were among the first to advocate this hypothesis (1738). The theory basically states that humans are self-centered and prefer certain services or goods over others. They also seek pleasure and avoid pain by avoiding risks. Humans are rational in their decision-making, and they strive for optimal in every scenario because their resources are finite.

Trade unions, according to this notion, exist to fight for the well-being of employees, particularly better wage packages and working conditions. They seek to speak on behalf of the employees for conditions that will give them pleasure and protect employees from any risk during their duty. This means that trade unions lobby for higher salaries and wages, raising the cost of production. This theory assumes that workers may maximize their benefits from their employers through trade unions Hafford (2009).

The Government on the other hand also desires to provide a conducive environment for its workers and puts in what it can within the available resources. Employees as the theory states are self-centered and prefer certain services or goods over others. They with the help of the trade unions, can even stop providing services until their demands are met. The question under this study is, 'how can the trade unions bargain effectively so that the terms and conditions for the employees economically acceptable.

Reviewed Literature

Collective bargaining in the Public Service involves negotiations between Government and the Public Service Unions (Chiwoya and Daka, 2021). The Government bargaining unit is expected to comply with government regulations when tackling the demands of the unions and as such, the negotiation process is lengthy compared to the process in non-public service institutions where management has the last word and does not necessarily have to answer to higher powers. However, unions in the non-public service institutions are more organized than those in representing workers in the public service. (Scheider, 2012). The basic weapons used by the management to enhance their bargaining powers include allowances and benefits of their workers. The two strategies give the employer room to maneuver when negotiating with the employees (Bernard, Wutch and Ryan, 2010) ^[12]. The common weapons used by the unions to increase their influence include go-slows and strikes. The threat to derail the operations of the Government/Institutions forces the management to meet the demands of the workers.

Studies have revealed that workers in developed countries are also represented by labour unions who bargain for terms and conditions of service. The activities of the labour unions center on collective bargaining over wages, benefits, and working conditions for their membership, and on representing their members in disputes with management over violations of contract provisions. A study by Kuruvilla (2002) ^[13] on Trade Union growth and decline in Asia highlights that the traditional Japanese labour-management relations is closely related to the single company unionism. This means that unions are not as independent of the company that employs their members as seen in Europe or the United States of America. In their findings, Kuruvilla (2002) ^[13] state that in Fiji for instance the government refused to recognize the Public Service Union. As such, public sector employees reported being too scared to engage in union activities out of fear of reprisals from their employers. This study is important because it shows some of the challenges that unions face in their operations.

Madimutsa and Pretorius (2017) ^[14] in their journal article titled Revisiting Trade Unions' Response to New Public Management: A Case from Zambia state that the New Public Management (NPM) reforms were introduced in Zambia through the adoption of structural adjustment programs in 1983. The NPM paradigm presents significant challenges for democratic governance by affecting the employment relations in the public sector leading to job losses, reduction in union membership, income and promotion of industrial conflict. The negative effects of reforming the public sector forces Trade Unions to make strategies to adapt to challenging circumstances.

In conclusion the reviewed literature shows Public Service Unions play a critical role in the determination of terms and conditions of service for public service employees. Studies have been conducted on challenges facing trade unions in executing their roles. However, there is insufficient literature on how Public Service trade unions can effectively bargain for terms and conditions of service for the employee. This is the gap that this research is attempting to fill.

Research Methodology

This study used qualitative approach because it provides deeper understanding of the issue being investigated,

honouring the voices of the participants. The approach also helped the researchers to examine the attitudes, feelings and motivations of the sample thereby permitting the researcher to get concrete answers needed to enhance effective collective bargaining by Public Service Unions (Ugwu & Eze, 2023). The research employed the case study research design, focusing on a particular trade union and its influence on the terms and conditions of service for employees within the Public Service of Zambia. The research was conducted in Lusaka province and involved Government Ministries and Cabinet Office because there was a need to have information from the employees, and Government officials who were all in the same locality. The union leaders were followed to their respective offices.

The study was drawn from a sample of 40 respondents which consisted 10 Union leaders with 1 from each union of the 10 unions, 10 members of the Government Bargaining Unit and 20 employees from the five (5) Government Ministries. Semi structured interview guide was used to collect data from the respondents. The researchers also used document analysis to collect data from relevant documents such as collective bargaining agreements, available policies, procedures used and other documents which were relevant to the study. Data was analyzed using the in vivo Software which permits the analysis of textual data from interviews. Chipindi, Serenje - Chipindi and Daka (2021) [6]. Ethical clearance was sought from the Ethics Committee to get informed consent for this study. Respondents were guaranteed complete anonymity, meaning that their true identities will not be revealed. In this regard, respondents were not mandated to disclose their names.

Findings

1. Factors affecting the bargaining power of the Public Service Unions in Zambia

The results from the interviews addressed the second objective of the research which was aimed at investigating the factors affecting the bargaining power of Public Service Unions in Zambia. The results obtained were grouped into themes presented below:

1.1. Multiplicity of Trade Unions

The presence of multiple trade unions within the Public Service was identified as a significant factor that dilutes the overall bargaining power. Majority of respondents noted that the existence of many unions led to conflicting interests and weakened the collective efforts to negotiate effectively with the Government. This was mentioned by the employees, members of the Union and the Government bargaining team. This was illustrated by one respondent who stated that:

“Fragmentation results in smaller unions selling their voices to larger ones, undermining collective bargaining efforts. The larger number of unions makes it challenging to negotiate effectively, as unions betray each other to gain favor from Government.”

2. Lack of Innovative Negotiation Strategies and Skills

Majority of the respondents cited the lack of capacity and necessary skills to engage in effective bargaining. The participants indicated that the lack of capacity and skill to negotiate impaired the unions' ability to present persuasive arguments during negotiations. Respondents identified the lack of innovative negotiation strategies as a key factor

affecting unions' bargaining power. As one participant noted:

“Unions lack innovative and strategic approaches when negotiating with employers or government bodies. The use of traditional methods to negotiate. The unions are not adapting to modern bargaining techniques.”

2.1. Political Interference and Corruption

Political interference and corruption were also highlighted as factors that compromise the unions' ability to advocate effectively for their members. Respondents explained that unions were often manipulated by both the running Government and opposition parties to serve political interests rather than focusing on improving conditions of service for the employees. The manipulation of unions by political institutions diminished their autonomy and limited their ability to criticize government policies that were not supporting the interest of the workers. One interviewee noted:

“Unions are manipulated by both the running government and opposition parties to serve political purposes rather than focusing on employee welfare. For instance, unionism has been politicized, with unions being used by government structures to fulfill their wishes, limiting their capacity to speak out.”

2.2. Lack of Transparency and Accountability

Lack of transparency and accountability in union leadership was frequently mentioned as a significant factor that undermines the credibility of Public Service Unions during negotiations. Many respondents expressed concerns about the secretive nature of certain bargaining activities, which erodes trust among union members. Some respondents mentioned that selected union leaders and government officials often held side meetings away from the bargaining table, which members perceived as being exclusionary and dishonest. One participant explained:

“During the last collective bargaining process, members of the Government bargaining team were having side meetings with some union officials away from the bargaining table, reducing the credibility of negotiations. The lack of transparency resulted in members feeling disconnected and distrustful of union leaders.”

2.3. Selfishness and Personal Gain among Union Leaders

Several participants identified selfishness and personal gain among union leaders as factors that undermined the unions' effectiveness. The respondents mentioned that some union leaders prioritized their own financial gain over the welfare of their members, creating a disconnect between union leadership and the broader membership. One respondent pointed out:

“Leaders are often more focused on personal gain than on advocating for their members' interests. This selfishness affects the unions' ability to function effectively. Union leaders focus on increasing salaries because their membership fee is a percentage of the basic salary, revealing a self-serving agenda.”

3. Guidelines on Collective Bargaining Process Between Government and Public Service Unions.

This part concerns guidelines on collective bargaining between Government and the Public Service Unions in Zambia. The specific objective was to propose guidelines

that can improve the Collective Bargaining process between Government and Public Service Unions.

3.1. Availability of guidelines on collective bargaining

The researcher inquired into the availability of guidelines on collective bargaining between Government and the Public Service Unions in Zambia. During the interviews, majority of the respondents referred to the guidelines for collective bargaining outlined in the Industrial and Labour Relations Act (ILRA) Cap 269 of the Laws of Zambia.

Document analysis revealed that the Industrial and Labour Relations Act Cap 26 defines a bargaining unit and its composition for purposes of collective bargaining. The Act also provides the period within which collective bargaining should be done following the signing of a collective agreement and the management of industrial disputes arising from collective bargaining. The Act further provides for management of a strike or lockout and the provision of essential service in an event of a strike. The Act also provides for approval, amendment, review and termination of the agreements between the employer and employee representatives.

However, the respondents unanimously expressed concerns about the insufficiency of these guidelines. Participants noted that although guidelines existed, they were often vague and lacked the comprehensiveness required for effective negotiations. One participant summarized this sentiment by stating:

“While guidelines exist, “a lot is missing,” indicating the need for a clearer and more robust framework that provides explicit and detailed steps for negotiation processes.”

3.2. Proposed guidelines to improve the collective bargaining process

Findings from interviews conducted revealed the following proposed guidelines to improved collective bargaining:

3.2.1. Establishment of Independent Bargaining Councils

Several respondents suggested establishing an independent body or council to coordinate the collective bargaining process to enhance fairness and transparency. The respondents were of the view that an independent Public Service Bargaining Council with financial and organizational support for bargaining and mediation would help manage negotiations objectively and ensure that the bargaining process is impartial and organized. One respondent stated that:

“Government should draw inspiration from successful models in other countries like South Africa where the bargaining council had created a structured and equitable bargaining environment that benefits both unions and the government.”

3.2.2. Coordination and Timing of Negotiations

Respondents frequently recommended that the negotiations for salaries and conditions of service should be undertaken prior to the preparation of the National Budget. Timing was seen as an important aspect of the process to allow for more meaningful discussions that could directly influence financial allocations. By advocating for early negotiations, respondents believed that unions could secure resources that aligned with their members’ needs, ensuring that financial limitations did not undermine their bargaining power.

One participant articulated this necessity, stating:

“We always negotiate after the national budget is prepared leaving us with little room for meaningful improvements to the salaries and conditions of service. The meetings are organized to basically endorse what has been set by Government.

3.2.3. Review of Law and Regulations on Collective Bargaining

Majority of the respondents indicated that there can be no collective bargaining without strong unions and that the law and regulations ought to be reviewed to stop continuous registration of the unions leading to union fragmentation weakening the union bargaining powers. They recommended the reduction of the number of unions or merging them to create stronger, more unified entities that can negotiate more effectively. A respondent asserted:

“Legislative changes that enhance collective bargaining rights could level the playing field, ensuring that unions have a fair chance to advocate for their members without undue limitations. Advocating for laws that support fair negotiation practices is crucial for empowering unions and ensuring that employee voices are heard.”

3.2.4. Establishing Clear Bargaining Protocols

The establishment of clear and structured bargaining protocols was another significant theme identified. Participants expressed a desire for documented processes that outline the steps, timelines, and responsibilities of all parties involved in negotiations. A well-defined protocol is believed to help maintain organization and ensure that all critical issues are addressed systematically, ultimately leading to more productive negotiations. One participant noted:

“Having a structured bargaining protocol would help us stay organized and ensure that all key issues are addressed systematically, reducing the likelihood of disputes.”

3.2.5. Training and Capacity Building for Negotiators

The need for training and capacity building for union negotiators emerged as a significant theme. Respondents indicated that equipping union leaders with negotiation skills and knowledge of relevant labor laws could empower them to advocate more effectively for their members. Training was viewed as a critical investment that could improve overall bargaining outcomes and enhance the union’s negotiating power. A union leader stated:

“In one negotiation, our representatives struggled to counter the government’s arguments simply because they did not understand the legal jargon. If we had training, we could have presented our case much more effectively.”

3.2.6. Utilizing Mediation and Third-Party Support

Respondents underscored the value of involving mediators or third-party experts in the collective bargaining process. Utilizing neutral parties to facilitate negotiations can help bridge gaps between the demands of unions and the constraints of management, potentially leading to more productive discussions and resolutions. One respondent suggested:

“Having a neutral mediator could help bridge the gap between our demands and management’s constraints, leading to more productive negotiations.”

Discussion of Findings

This section discusses in the order of findings presented above on the factors affecting the bargaining power of the Public Service Unions in Zambia, and to guidelines that can improve the Collective Bargaining process between Government and Public Service Unions.

1. Factors affecting the bargaining power of the Public Service Unions in Zambia.

The findings of the study suggested that the multiplicity of trade unions is a significant factor undermining union effectiveness. Respondents reported that having multiple unions' leads to fragmentation, weakening collective bargaining efforts. This is consistent with Marietta (2019), who found that union fragmentation in Bulgaria weakened bargaining power. However, studies from Scandinavian countries, such as Finland and Sweden, show that multiple unions can coexist under coordinated bargaining frameworks, enhancing overall bargaining strength (US Bureau of Labor Statistics). This contradiction suggests that the negative impact of union multiplicity may depend on how unions are structured and organized.

The findings indicated that political interference and corruption significantly weaken unions' bargaining power, as unions are often used as political tools rather than focusing on member welfare. This is similar to the situation in Fiji, where unions were manipulated by the government, leading to diminished union effectiveness (Kuruville, 2002)^[13]. However, Chiwoya and Daka (2021) argues that political engagement can strengthen unions when conducted transparently and aligned with member interests, highlighting a potential area for reform in Zambia.

Lack of transparency and accountability within union leadership was another key challenge identified. Respondents noted that secret meetings between union officials and government representatives diminish trust among members. These findings are consistent with the literature on union governance issues in developing countries, where a lack of transparency often leads to reduced union credibility. Contradicting this, some unions in Asia have improved transparency through corporate governance reforms, leading to increased member trust and retention (Kuruville, 2002)^[13]. This indicates that governance reforms could be important for Public Service unions to regain trust and strengthen their bargaining position.

The study further found that selfishness and personal gain among union leaders undermine union credibility, with some leaders prioritizing personal interests over those of their members. While this aligns with criticisms of leadership issues in unions globally, other studies, like Chiwoya and Daka (2021), suggest that unions with strong internal governance can operate effectively and maintain member trust. This indicates that addressing leadership integrity is important for union effectiveness in the Public Service.

Poor negotiation strategies and tactics were also identified as limiting unions' effectiveness, with respondents noting that unions often fail to adopt modern bargaining approaches. This finding is in line with Chizyuka and Daka (2021)^[9], who reported that unions with well-trained negotiators achieve better outcomes. However, this contradicts findings from other contexts where unions have successfully used innovative tactics to enhance bargaining

results. This suggests a need for investment in strategic planning and modern negotiation techniques for the Public Service Unions in Zambia.

2. The Guidelines That Can Improve the Collective Bargaining Process Between Government and Public Service Unions.

The findings of the study revealed that the availability and clarity of guidelines are important for improving the collective bargaining process between government and Public Service Unions in Zambia. Currently, the provisions under the Industrial and Labour Relations Act (ILRA) Cap 269 are seen as vague and subject to frequent legal interpretation, which complicates the bargaining process. Respondents emphasized that these ambiguities often lead to disputes and hinder productive negotiations. The need for a more robust and unambiguous legal framework is evident, as it would help both parties government and unions understand their rights and obligations clearly, thereby reducing conflicts and promoting more effective and streamlined negotiations. (Silwamba and Daka, 2021).

The study also revealed that reducing the multiplicity of unions is pivotal to improving the collective bargaining process. Respondents suggested that consolidating unions into fewer, stronger entities could enhance their ability to represent workers more effectively and negotiate better terms with the government. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Dyer (2012)^[10], which noted that poor communication and fragmentation within unions often result in underperformance and reduced effectiveness. A unified approach would ensure that unions are not working at cross-purposes, thereby increasing their collective strength and improving their ability to advocate for their members' needs during negotiations.

The respondents emphasized that improving the negotiation skills of union leaders through targeted training programs is essential for effective collective bargaining. With better training, union leaders would be more adept at navigating complex negotiation processes, understanding legal provisions, and employing strategic advocacy to secure favorable outcomes for their members. This view aligns with the role of trade unions in providing training on various topics such as employment rights, health, and safety, as highlighted by Madimutsa (2019)

The findings of the study further underscored the importance of proper coordination and timing of negotiations. The rationale behind this suggestion is that early negotiations would allow for more meaningful discussions that could influence budgetary allocations. By negotiating before the budget is finalized, unions and the government can engage in more substantive deliberations without the constraints of predetermined financial limits. This finding is supported by the literature, such as the study by Bryson et al. (2012)^[4], which highlights the significance of timing in resolving employee grievances and ensuring productive outcomes.

The establishment of independent bargaining councils was another factor highlighted by the study. Respondents proposed the creation of a Public Service Bargaining Council or similar body that would manage negotiations in an unbiased manner, drawing on successful models from other countries. The establishment of such councils could mitigate conflicts of interest, as they would serve as neutral platforms where both parties unions and government

representatives could engage in fair and open dialogue. This suggestion aligns with the findings of Chiwoya and Daka (2021), who noted that transparency and accountability are key to perceptions of union effectiveness. Independent bargaining councils would ensure that negotiations are conducted in a structured and transparent manner.

The need to focus on broader employee welfare beyond just salary increases was another critical theme identified by the study. The respondents argued that negotiations should encompass a wider range of issues, such as housing, health, transport, and retirement benefits, rather than being narrowly focused on salary increments. This broader approach to employee welfare aligns with modern human resource practices, which recognize that employee satisfaction and productivity are influenced by various factors, not just pay. The literature corroborates this perspective, with Madimutsa (2017)^[14] highlighting the role of unions in advocating for comprehensive employment terms that address diverse aspects of employee welfare.

Respondents also recommended a review of policies and regulations to promote fair collective bargaining practices. Establishing laws that protect union rights while allowing management to operate effectively creates a balanced negotiation environment. Legislative changes aimed at enhancing collective bargaining rights are vital for ensuring that unions can effectively advocate for their members without undue constraints.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This section presents the conclusions and recommendations drawn from the study. The study revealed key issues, such as reducing union membership and the multiplicity of unions, which fragments their collective bargaining strength making them less effective in advocating for their members' interests. It was also noted that the lack of capacity, poor negotiation skills and weak negotiation strategies negatively affected the ability of the union leaders to engage in effective collective bargaining, often resulting in poor outcomes of the process. The study further, revealed that Political interference significantly weakened the unions because their focus shifted from labor rights and member welfare to political agendas, diminishing their credibility and bargaining effectiveness. The absence of clear collective bargaining protocols and vague provisions of the law also negatively affected the ability of the Public Service Unions to effectively bargain for improved salaries and conditions of service for the employees.

According to the study, improving the collective bargaining process required clearer and more comprehensive guidelines, reducing the multiplicity of unions and establishing independent bargaining councils could enhance fairness and transparency in negotiations. It concluded that depoliticizing union activities was essential for ensuring that unions focus on labor rights and negotiation issues rather than political agendas. Additionally, the study concluded that there was need for broader negotiations beyond salary increases, including aspects like housing, health, and retirement benefits, to better address employee welfare.

The findings of this study support the following recommendations:

1. Amendment of the Industrial and Labour Relations Act Cap 269 to provide for clear guidelines on collective bargaining.

2. Government should invoke the provisions of section 2 of the Industrial and Labour Relations (Amendment) Act No. 8 of 2008 which defines the Bargaining Unit to allow for negotiations with the most representative trade union in a sector.
3. Establish and implement an independent body or council to coordinate the collective bargaining process for purposes of enhancing fairness and transparency.
4. Put in place measures to depoliticize trade union activities. This would allow unions to focus on labor rights and negotiations rather than political agendas that undermine their core mission.
5. Parties to the collective bargaining process for the Public Service should invest in training programs to improve the skills and knowledge of the process.
6. The Collective bargaining process for the Public Service should be undertaken prior to the preparation of the National Budget to allow the unions leverage to bargain for conditions of service representative of the needs of the employees.
7. Unions and the government should move from the traditional way of focusing on the salaries by including broader employee welfare issues in collective bargaining. This could encompass housing, healthcare, funeral benefits, transportation, and retirement benefits to ensure a comprehensive approach to improving working conditions.

This research provides valuable insights into effective collective bargaining by Public Service Unions in Zambia. The findings and recommendations may, however, not be generalized because the factors affecting the ability of the unions to bargain effectively in the Public Service could be different from those affecting the collective bargaining process in the private and Grant Aided Institutions. As such, a similar research can be conducted focusing on what could be done to improve collective bargaining in the private sector.

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