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## Influence of Collective Bargaining on Organizational Performance in the Tea Factories Managed by the Kenya Tea Development Agency

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### **Abstract:**

*This study investigated the influence of collective bargaining on organizational performance in tea factories managed by KTDA. The Kenyan tea industry faces numerous challenges that have impacted its overall performance and one potential explanation that has gained increased attention is the role of trade unions in enhancing the industry's fortunes. The study determined the relationship between Organizational Performance and Collective Bargaining. A Descriptive Survey design was adopted to conduct the study in the sixty-six (66) tea factories managed by the KTDA, which operates in all the tea-growing regions within Kenya. The factories were categorized into seven strata based on their regional location, and a sample size of 30% was randomly drawn from each stratum. This resulted in a total of 23 factories being selected for the study. Thereafter, the Human Resource and Administration Manager and Union Official were selected using purposive sampling, whereas Union Members were chosen randomly, resulting in three (3) respondents from each of the 23 sampled factories, totaling 69 respondents. Both primary and secondary data were used in this study, with primary data being collected using structured questionnaires. The questionnaires were tested and revised, and reliability was assessed, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.786 that affirmed the reliability of the measure. The collected data underwent both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. The analysis revealed that collective bargaining (Beta = 0.347, t = 3.296, p = 0.002) had a significant positive effect on organizational performance. The study recommended that organizations should improve the quality of collective bargaining practices in the workplace for improved organizational performance.*

**Keywords:** Trade union, organizational performance, collective bargaining

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background of the Study

In workplaces, trade unions are recognized as necessary organizations that protect the interests and rights of employees from abuse and possible exploitation by management (Bhreshtha, 2012). Trade union activities include the negotiation of wages, collective bargaining agreements, workplace rules, grievance procedures, and workplace policies, among others (Thomas & Daryl, 2012). The performance of an organization can be assessed in various ways, such as achievements in relation to objectives, competency levels, behavior, creativity and innovation, adherence to core values, efficiency of internal business processes and customer satisfaction (Armstrong, 2008; Li, 2006; Lusch & Laczniak, 2009). Employee performance is commonly measured by quality and timeliness of output, attendance, and cooperativeness, while the regulatory framework, union-management relations, management style and organizational structure also impact performance (Amwayi, 2015). While evidence suggests that organizations that have unions are more productive than ones without, the trade unions' impact on the performance of an organization is not always positive. Research suggests that organizations that have unions are more productive than ones without, and this is attributed to trade unions' ability to negotiate better working conditions, wages, and benefits for employees (Devinatz, 2011; Griswold, 2010; Deery & Iverson, 2005; Pencavel, 2009; Amah & Ahiauzu, 2013). Deery and Iverson (2005) note that trade unions can hinder the adoption of modern technologies, negatively affecting organizational performance. Conversely, successful negotiations for better remuneration packages and working conditions for employees by trade unions can have a positive impact on performance (Deery & Iverson, 2005). Nevertheless, trade unions can also disrupt organizational performance through strikes,

slowdowns, and sabotage if negotiations fail (Deery & Iverson, 2005). There is a need to maintain good working relationships between employers and their employees through trade unions for improved performance and avoidance of disruptions in workflow and the operations of the organizations.

### *1.2. Kenya Tea Development Agency*

According to Owuor (2013), indigenous Kenyans were prohibited by law from growing tea before Kenya gained independence. However, as the country approached independence, this legislation was revoked, allowing indigenous people to start cultivating tea. In order to promote African tea cultivation, the colonial government in 1960 established the Special Crops Development Authority (SCDA) under the Ministry of Agriculture. After Kenya gained independence, the SCDA's liabilities and functions were taken over by the KTDA, established by legal notice No.42 of 1964 (Republic of Kenya, 1964). The agency's purpose was to encourage and facilitate the growth of tea on small farms, which were previously considered unfeasible due to the technical knowledge and costs required, as demonstrated in the plantation sector. As explained by Mwaura (2017), the Kenya Tea Development Authority was eventually privatized and renamed the Kenya Tea Development Agency Limited. KTDA was then incorporated as a private company under Kenyan laws (CAP, 486) on June 15, 2000.

KTDA is one of the largest private tea management agencies in Kenya, overseeing the management of sixty-six (66) factories in Kenya's small-scale tea subsector (Kenya Tea Development Agency, n.d.). According to the KTDA, the tea sector employs over 500,000 smallholder farmers and over 150,000 workers in tea processing factories. Tea factories managed by KTDA are responsible for processing and marketing tea as a representative of the smallholder farmers who own the land (Kenya Tea Development Agency, n.d.; Owuor, 2013).

### *1.3. Development of Trade Unions in Kenya*

The trade unions' formation dates back to the early 1900s in Kenya. This was in response to the exploitation of workers by colonial authorities and European settlers (Gachiengo, 2018). The first trade union, the Labour Trade Union of Kenya, was formed in 1909, but it was not recognized by the colonial government. The Trade Unions Ordinance of 1935 provided a framework for the registration and operation of trade unions, leading to the formation of several unions, including the East African Trade Union Congress in 1949, which brought together unions from Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. After independence in 1963, the Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU) was established in 1965 by the government as the umbrella body for all trade unions (Gathara, 2019). However, in the 1980s, economic recession and austerity measures led to increased labor unrest and strained the government and trade unions' relationship.

In the 1990s, trade unions became more independent with the introduction of multi-party democracy, leading to the emergence of new unions, such as the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) (Mwagiru, 2016). The Kenya Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union (KPAWU) was formed in 1975 and is affiliated with COTU, focusing on protecting and promoting the rights of agricultural and plantation workers, including those in the tea industry (Gachiengo, 2018). KPAWU has been instrumental in fighting for better wages, improved working conditions and increased benefits for tea workers in Kenya and has been involved in negotiations with tea factories managed by the KTDA (Gathara, 2019). Trade unions are still organized on an industrial basis in Kenya and operate under the Trade Unions Act (Cap, 233) (Mutunga & Barasa, 2016).

According to the Act, union activities are limited to non-supervisory workers, except those who engage in administrative representational, confidential, directive and supervisory activities (Mutunga & Barasa, 2016). Despite this restriction, trade unions in Kenya are recognized as legitimate representatives of workers and have been involved in negotiations with employers on various issues, including wages and working conditions (Karanja, 2021). The relationship between the trade unions and employers in Kenya is viewed as a partnership, with both parties working towards common goals (Karanja, 2021). However, some researchers argue that this partnership is pragmatic and is aimed at maintaining support from employers and the state rather than achieving the interests of workers (Nzomo, 2019). The concept of social partnership can also be criticized if it does not provide equal benefits to all parties involved, including managers and employers (Daglish, 2020).

### *1.4. Statement of the Problem*

The Kenya tea industry significantly impacts the country's economy, providing employment opportunities for over 500,000 smallholder farmers and thousands of tea factory workers. The KTDA manages the tea factories with the goal of maximizing productivity and profitability while ensuring fair wages and working conditions for employees. One factor that can potentially influence the performance of tea factories is trade union activities which play a crucial role in protecting workers' interests and negotiating better working conditions. Despite court orders after the KPGA appealed a court ruling that had granted employees several benefits, including a 30% salary increase, retirement at age 60, one rest day per week, and medical and baggage allowances of Ksh.30,000 each, the KPAWU claimed that it was unable to intervene in the go-slow due to not calling for it in the first place (TBK, 2016). The industry had faced challenges such as a decline in production reported in 2016 (TBK, 2016), which had raised concerns about its performance in response to labor disputes during which some tea firms incurred losses when employees refused to work. The numerous challenges faced have impacted its overall performance and one potential explanation that has gained increased attention is the role of trade unions in enhancing the industry's fortunes. This study investigated the potential influence of trade unions on organizational performance in tea factories managed by the KTDA to contribute to the understanding of the relationship between trade unions and the performance of an organization.

## 2. Literature Review

Collective bargaining is a process through which trade unions and management negotiate to determine the employment terms and conditions for workers. The Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) sets rules governing the hiring of workers, promotion, firing, benefits, wages, policies and workplace safety. According to Armstrong (2007), the CBAs are agreed upon between management, the federation of employer negotiating bodies or employers' associations and the trade unions in determining specific employee employment terms and conditions of service for various categories. Trade unions negotiate for, among others, wages, work rules, complaint procedures and employee relations procedures (Kaufman, 2013). Trade unions have a significant impact on the government and organizations. They have historically put pressure on governments to pass laws friendly to the workers, such as minimum wage and any other trade regulations (Griswold, 2010). However, most often, trade unions have clashed with the governments and throughout history, they have used industrial action, including strikes, to get their demands met. Despite the decline in union density, the study by Kaufman (2013) found that collective bargaining remains an effective tool for improving employee relations and performance. Collective bargaining has been recognized as an important tool for achieving regulated flexibility within industrial relations systems. Collective bargaining is a fundamental mechanism for improving working conditions, reducing inequality, and promoting social justice (García-Pérez & Malmusi, 2021). Trade unions play a crucial role in negotiating specific terms and conditions of employment, including wages, work rules, and benefits, on behalf of their members through collective bargaining with management (Vandaele & Pulignano, 2017). They advocate for better working conditions and policies and provide guidance to employees during negotiations with employers. Recent studies have shown that unions are increasingly relying on non-strike tactics, such as grievance procedures and arbitration (Keller, 2021). The primary aim of trade unions is to promote and safeguard their members' interests while at the same time collaborating with management on decisions that affect their members' interests (Sarfraz *et al.*, 2021). Trade unions can also have a political role, with senior union leaders advocating for significant social and labor legislation (Schmitter & Grote, 2014). However, trade unions must be cautious of political dynamics when exercising political power. The success of trade unions in improving organizational performance depends on management's willingness to consult with trade union officials and engage in collective bargaining (Godfrey *et al.*, 2007). The absence of such commitment from management can hinder partnership initiatives between employers and unions, resulting in nothing more than a rhetoric of partnership (Vandaele & Pulignano, 2017). Adewole *et al.* (2010) highlighted that through consultation with representatives of workers and collective negotiation, industrial conflicts can be effectively managed between employers and employees. Collective bargaining provides a framework on how to deal with issues of industrial relations without having to resort to lockouts and strikes, thus promoting mutual understanding and cooperation between the management and employees. Studies have shown that there is an improved industrial relation in an environment where through collective bargaining, workers' employment terms and conditions are determined and where management supports trade unions (Beardwell *et al.*, 2004; Edwards, 2002). According to Gomez *et al.* (2003), a fair and legal collective bargaining process can lead to the maintenance of peace and industrial discipline. When parties sign written contracts that make their agreements formal, it is binding to them, resulting in successful collective bargaining. Gyesie (2017) studied the influence of collective bargaining agreements on the management of employee performance and found that collective bargaining can impact the performance of an employee. Studies have shown that collective bargaining can affect industrial relations quality and organizational performance. Bataglia and Barreto (2020) found that unionized firms had higher levels of productivity and profitability compared to non-unionized firms. Gicheva *et al.* (2018) found that unions can help reduce worker turnover rates, ultimately enhancing organizational performance. However, the effect of trade unions on the performance of an organization is not uniform across all industries and contexts. For example, Arunachalam and Illo (2019) found that trade unions in the Indian garment industry had a negative impact on firm-level productivity due to high union density and the prevalence of labour disputes.

In conclusion, the literature suggests that properly conducted collective bargaining is crucial in industrial relations and can have a positive effect on the performance of an organization. It fosters mutual understanding and cooperation between management and workers, thereby, without the need for lockouts and strikes, offering a framework through which industrial relations concerns are addressed. Successful collective bargaining can help maintain industrial peace and discipline, significantly affecting employee relations, which impacts organizational performance (Gomez *et al.*, 2003).

## 3. Research Methodology

### 3.1. Research Design

A research design is a systematic design that directs the plan of conditions for collecting and analyzing data in a way that seeks to balance the significance of the research purpose with efficiency in a procedure (Kothari, 2004). Research design is essential as it facilitates efficient research operations, maximizing information with minimal spending of time, effort, and money. The determinants for selecting the design are factors such as the research purpose, hypotheses, data categories, data sources, and cost considerations (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). A descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. Descriptive research is useful in providing an accurate and valid representation of study variables without manipulating the variables and reporting various aspects defining competency (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2012; Patton, 2000). Descriptive survey design involves collecting data through surveys, observations, or interviews and then summarizing and describing the data using statistical measures such as mean, median, and mode (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

A quantitative research methodology was employed for this study, which follows a deductive approach and focuses on describing and establishing relationships among variables (Cooper & Schindler, 2014; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). This research design was well-suited for achieving the research objectives as it allows the collection, analysis and presentation of data that describes the associations between the variables under investigation without manipulating them.

### 3.2. Target Population

According to Kothari (2004), the target population is the particular group of individuals or entities for whom information is sought or desired. As defined by Cooper and Schindler (2014), a population, therefore, constitutes all the elements that a researcher desires to study, while Sekaran and Bougie (2016) describe a population as a group of people, events, or things of interest to the researcher for examination and inference. In this case, the target population is the whole set of elements within a specific population the researcher wants to study (Zikmund & Babin, 2013). The participants included Human Resource and Administration Officers, Union Officials, and Union Members from each of the sixty-six tea factories managed by the KTDA.

### 3.3. Sample and Sampling Procedures

Sampling design is a procedure used by researchers to select a subset of the population from which they intend to gather a sample (Creswell, 2014). It is important to note that the sample size, being a small representation of the population, should be at least 30% of the entire population to be considered adequate for study (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2009), a sampling technique is the process of selecting respondents from the population. In this study, stratified random sampling was used to select a representative sample of tea factories. Stratified random sampling involves the process of dividing a population into distinct strata and, thereafter, randomly selecting a sample from each of the stratum (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The factories were divided into seven strata based on the factories' regional location and within each stratum, a 30% sample size was drawn by simple random sampling resulting in a total of 23 factories selected for the study. By employing stratified random sampling, researchers can minimize bias, keep costs relatively low, enhance the accessibility of the study population, facilitate the data collection and attain an accurate representation of the target population (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

Thereafter, the Human Resource and Administration Manager and Union Official were selected using purposive sampling, whereas Union Members were chosen randomly, resulting in three (3) respondents from each of the 23 sampled factories, totaling 69 respondents, as shown in Table 1. Purposive sampling, as defined by Mugenda *et al.* (2003), is a technique through which the researcher is enabled to choose cases or elements that possess necessary information with regard to the study's objectives. Therefore, the subjects were selected based on their informativeness or possession of the required characteristics.

S/No.	Region	No. of Factories	Sampled Factories (30%)	Sample Size
1	Region 1	12	4	12
2	Region 2	9	3	9
3	Region 3	8	3	9
4	Region 4	8	3	9
5	Region 5	12	4	12
6	Region 6	12	4	12
7	Region 7	5	2	6
	TOTAL	66	23	69

Table 1: Sample Size  
Source: Researcher (2018)

### 3.4. Data Collection Instruments

Data collection involves the systematic gathering of information (Burns & Grove, 2013). According to Kombo and Tromp (2009), data collection plays a crucial role in disseminating accurate information and developing meaningful programs. Both primary and secondary data were used in this study, with primary data being collected using structured questionnaires. Malhotra and Birks (2006) refer to primary data as the information gathered directly by the researcher from the field to specifically address or resolve a particular identified problem within the research project.

According to Cooper and Schindler (2014), structured questionnaires contain closed-ended questions, ensuring uniformity in responses and easy analysis. The researcher self-administered the questionnaires that were completed by the respondents, which was consistent with a phenomenological approach. Questionnaires provide an efficient and cost-effective method for gathering data from large numbers of participants while also offering benefits such as standardized responses, anonymity, flexibility, and easy analysis (Tourangeau & Yan, 2007; Dillman, 2000; de Leeuw & Hox, 2008).

### 3.5. Data Analysis and Presentation

Data analysis involves editing, coding and tabulating the collected data to create manageable and easily interpretable summaries (Cox & Cairns, 2008). Data cleaning, including coding, editing and organizing data prior to analysis, was done to ensure accuracy and consistency. The raw data was input into the Statistical Package for Social

Sciences (SPSS) software version 20, which was then used to process and generate data arrays for analysis. The use of statistical software such as SPSS can assist in processing and analyzing data, as well as generating tables and graphs for presentation (Kinnear & Gray, 2018). A descriptive statistical technique was thereafter used to aid in the depiction of the data by utilizing percentages, frequencies and measures of variability, like the standard deviation and variance, for interpretation.

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), descriptive statistics usually enable meaningful descriptions of the distribution of scores or measurements by employing only a few statistics or indices. Tables were used to present the findings for further analysis and comparison and they were accompanied by explanatory notes to highlight the contents. The study utilized inferential statistics to examine the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Descriptive Analysis

The results of the calculated mean and standard deviation are indicated in Table 2. The results show that, on average, the respondents agreed that strikes are frequently witnessed in their organization (mean = 4.03) with a (standard deviation = 0.474), suggesting that strikes are a common occurrence in tea factories managed by KTDA. Furthermore, the respondents strongly agreed that strikes negatively affect organizational performance (mean = 4.71) with a (standard deviation = 0.551), indicating that strikes have a significant impact on the operations of the tea factories. Also indicated is that trade unions have used strikes as the primary tool to express themselves when negotiations fail (mean = 4.81), with a (standard deviation = 0.396), suggesting that trade unions rely heavily on strikes to make their demands.

Additionally, the trade unions within the organization are seen as an effective mobilizers of employees for collective action when negotiations fail (mean = 4.76) with a (standard deviation = 0.429), implying that the union is seen as a strong force in the tea factories. Finally, the respondents agreed that the trade union negotiates better wages and working condition terms for its members (mean = 4.56) with a (standard deviation = 0.690), indicating that the union plays a significant role in improving the welfare of their members in tea factories managed by KTDA.

Statements on Collective Bargaining	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Union strikes are frequently witnessed in our organization	63	3	5	4.03	.474
Strikes interfere with the normal operation and negatively affect organizational performance	63	3	5	4.71	.551
Trade unions have used strikes as the primary tool to express themselves when negotiations fail	63	4	5	4.81	.396
Employees are mobilized by the trade unions for collective action when negotiations fail	63	4	5	4.76	.429
Better wages and working conditions terms are negotiated by the trade union for their members	63	3	5	4.56	.690
Valid N (listwise)	63				

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Collective Bargaining  
Source: Researcher (2018)

The mean for the statements ranged from 4.03 to 4.81, indicating that the respondents generally agreed with the statements. The statement with the lowest mean (4.03) was "Union strikes are frequently witnessed in our organization," indicating that strikes were not a common occurrence in the tea factories, while the statement "Trade unions have used strikes as the primary tool to express themselves when negotiations fail," had the highest mean (4.81), indicating that the respondents generally agreed that strikes were the primary way that trade unions expressed their dissatisfaction when negotiations failed. The standard deviations ranged from 0.396 to 0.690, indicating that the responses were relatively consistent for all statements. The statement with the lowest standard deviation (0.396) was: "Trade unions have used strikes as the primary tool to express themselves when negotiations fail," indicating that there was the least variation in the responses to this statement. On the other hand, the statement with the highest standard deviation (0.690) was: "Better wages and working condition terms are negotiated by the trade union for their members." This suggests that there was a greater range of responses and increased variability in the answers provided for this particular statement. As suggested by the results, the role played by collective bargaining is important in the performance of tea factories managed by KTDA and strikes are not a common occurrence in these factories.

In summary, the research findings support the notion that collective bargaining can enhance organizational performance. However, the reliance on strikes as a means of expressing dissatisfaction with management can negatively affect organizational performance. Organizations should, therefore, strive to maintain positive relationships with their employees and trade unions to foster a cooperative work environment and minimize the occurrence of strikes. Previous research also demonstrated a positive correlation between collective bargaining and organizational performance. For

instance, a study conducted by Sabir, Mahmood, and Mahmood (2020) established that collective bargaining had a positive impact on organizational performance in the banking sector in Pakistan.

Similarly, a study by Mawoli and Gachunga (2019) found that collective bargaining positively affects organizational performance in Kenya's manufacturing sector. However, other studies indicated a negative relationship between collective bargaining and organizational performance. For example, a study by Bøg, Kuhn, and Vanhuysse (2018) indicated that strikes have a negative impact on firm-level productivity and profitability in European countries. Another study by Bahadir, Brouthers, and Yildirim (2018) found that strikes negatively affect firm performance in emerging markets. These studies suggest that strikes can disrupt organizational operations and result in reduced productivity and profitability.

#### 4.2. Inferential Analysis

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.470	.213		2.210	.031
	Collective Bargaining	.296	.090	.347	3.296	.002

Table 3: 1 Collective Bargaining Regression Coefficient  
Source: Researcher (2018)

Table 3 indicates the regression coefficients for the model examining the influence of collective bargaining on organizational performance in tea factories managed by the KTDA. The study revealed a significant positive effect on organizational performance from collective bargaining (Beta = 0.347, t = 3.296, p = 0.002).

### 5. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

#### 5.1. Summary

The regression analysis results showed a positive and statistically significant relationship between collective bargaining and organizational performance. The study established that collective bargaining allows employees to negotiate as a group through their trade unions for better wages, improved working conditions, and benefits. This leads to employee satisfaction, motivation, and commitment to their work, ultimately resulting in improved organizational performance. Additionally, management's attitude towards collective bargaining was found to affect the bargaining process's outcome. When management is supportive and open-minded, both parties tend to benefit. Trade unions' challenge is to advocate for worker welfare without jeopardizing the companies' interests. Additionally, successful negotiations for higher wages can prompt managers to manipulate factors of production to cover increased labor costs and increase performance.

#### 5.2. Conclusion

The results of the study revealed that organizations that improve collective bargaining exhibit better performance. However, the study also identified that trade union activities such as collective bargaining can present management challenges that have a negative effect on organizational performance, for example, when unions resort to strike when negotiations fail. Therefore, there is a need to address such challenges to optimize performance outcomes, which is essential for organizations.

#### 5.3. Recommendations

According to the results of the findings, the study recommends that organizations should work with their unions to improve the quality of collective bargaining, as the study established that collective bargaining has a positive and significant effect on organizational performance. The study further recommends that organizations should develop strategies to address the management challenges posed by trade unions' activities, including collective bargaining, such as improving communication and transparency with union representatives. Finally, organizations should monitor continuously and evaluate the effect of union activities on organizational performance to identify areas that require improvement and ensure the positive effects are sustained.

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