

AMELIORATING ADVERSE EFFECTS OF GLOBALIZATION ON EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS IN ZIMBABWE

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Abstract

Globalisation has been associated with accelerated deregulation and withdrawal of government from the workstation, (Sweeney, 2004). The advent of globalisation has forced organisations in Zimbabwe to deal with implications such as loss of market, response to competition, technological and legislative changes. A conundrum that have witnessed a change in human resources policy, employee compensation, business strategies among others. These changes have also resulted in massive shift in employment relations between employers and t employees and relations between employees and their unions. Subsequent to this background, this article's objectives are to identify challenges occasioned by globalisation on employment relations in Zimbabwe and proffer mechanisms to ameliorating the adverse effects of globalisation. A qualitative phenomenological research was adopted making use of interviews, researcher field notes and memoirs to gather data on participants' experiences. Results were analysed using Nvivo 10 and manual coding. Results identified six main challenges namely (1) strife between employers and employees (2) dwindling employee democracy (3) employee marginalisation (4) increased disputes (5) general dissatisfaction of all parties and (6) disunity among unions and workers. The study recommended four mitigating strategies namely contextualising globalisation; making use of training and education; increased employee involvement; and use of dialogue and communication. If these factors are considered a fair globalization can be achieved.

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Keywords: *globalization; employment relations; employees; employers; workplace democracy.*

JEL Classification: F66

Introduction

The advent of globalisation has had both positive and negative impact on employment relations across the globe and indeed on Zimbabwe in particular. In the late 1980s the globalisation phenomena deepened at an accelerated rate, evidenced in the collapse of the Berlin Wall in Germany, collapse of Soviet Union and victory of capitalism over socialism epitomised by the end of the cold war in 1989. Arguably these events helped in inspiring a new world order towards adoption of global collaboration, neo-liberal strategies and capitalism (Brahm, 2002). Governments became inclined more than ever to solve international problems through constructive engagement and dialogue, and creation of free trade systems by promoting liberalisation of markets and deregulation (Schiphorst, 2001).

As the tidal waves of globalisation grew, Zimbabwe joined the globalisation bandwagon, and perhaps it was the abatement of ideological conflicts and the triumph of globalisation over socialism that left Zimbabwe with one choice of adopting trade liberalisation and labour market deregulation (Saunders, 2007). Backed by World Bank's polices of Economic and Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) and through the influence of the Tripartite Negotiating Forum (TNF) and direct lobbying by employer boards like the Employers' Confederation of Zimbabwe (EMCOZ), Zimbabwe formulated a new employment relations policy that was legalised into a new labour legislation in 1992 (Sachikonye, 1990). These changes ushered in a new era with new challenges like industrial disharmony among others in Zimbabwean employment relations. It is out of the backdrop of these challenges that this study drew its research problem and objectives.

Problem statement, research questions and objectives

A plethora of challenges emerged as a result of massive labour deregulation and market liberalisation in Zimbabwe. The influence and dictates of investors, transnational companies, international trade policies and international monetary institutions on Zimbabwean labour markets led to unstandardised form of employment regulations in Zimbabwe (Schiphorst, 2001). In fact, it led to the

disintegration of trade unions into industry specific unions and creation of industry specific collective bargaining forums (National Employment Councils - NECs) and reduced union bargaining power. Contracts of employment became more and more unfavourable for employees. There was an increase in fixed-term contracts, casual labour, labour brooking, sub-contracting and part-time employment as permanent employment contracts dwindled (Sachikonye & Raftopoulos, 2018). Employment relations became synonymous with continued employee marginalisation. In 2008 Zimbabwe was put on the International Labour Organisation (ILO) agenda for breaching the declaration on Fair Globalisation Protocol, and in 2017, it was found in breach of Convention 87 and 89 accused of infringing worker rights (Ncube, 2017). Despite these points and pessimistic views against globalisation, the World Bank (2018) argued that globalisation is not always bad and Zimbabwe needs to embrace it to improve its economic environment. In view of this, solutions should be crafted to ameliorate the adverse impact of globalisation on Zimbabwean employment relations.

Research questions

- What forms of challenges are occasioned by globalisation in Zimbabwean employment relations?
- What mechanisms could address the challenges of globalisation in the sphere of employment relations in Zimbabwe?

Research objectives

- To identify the challenges prevalent in Zimbabwean employment relations as a result of the impact of globalisation.
- To suggest mechanisms to address challenges posed by globalisation on employment relations in Zimbabwe.

Literature Review

Globalisation and its hallmarks on employment relations in Zimbabwe

Globalisation is a growing phenomenon the world over identified with increased competition, labour market flexibility and deregulation of employment laws (Dunning, 1997). Perhaps the most adverse effects of globalisation that Zimbabwe has suffered to date is the United States of America, Britain and European Union economic sanctions and isolation that characterised its economy since 2000 to date. Today Zimbabwean organisations are being exposed to

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international markets where they have to trade and compete with international giants. In order to survive, the organisations will have to develop and acquire new competencies that either meet the globalisation yardstick or they in some instances adopt some strategies internally like low wages, long working hours, declaration of economic zones and applications for exemptions from adhering to strict labour legislations as a means to adapt and survive (Sachikonye & Raftopoulos, 2018).

These developments have had negative effects on employment relations leading to increased disputes and rise of labour litigations. In 2015 alone nearly over 30 000 permanent employees lost their jobs after the Supreme Court ruling on the **Don Nyamande & Anor v Zuva Petroleum** case upheld the global common law right that any part to an employment contract can terminate the contract upon giving a prescribed notice. What followed from the Don Nyamande Supreme Court ruling was a massive termination of employment contracts. Mucheche (2017) commented that, employment relations were in tatters, and labour wrangles increased as never before imagined.

However, it is not necessary true that globalisation heralded predominately negative effects in employment relations. In fact, globalisation has created an imperative for individual employees to develop specific skills, competencies, and abilities to match global labour market requirements. In organisations it led to new style of operations, management, structure, new processes and practices (Utpal & Pragma, 2014). Globalisation brought about equity and fairness in work places. Employees in Zimbabwe regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, tribe, religion and creed are treated the same in wages, promotions, discipline and any workplace relations factors. Kanyenze (2011) observed that the influence occasioned by globalisation necessitated workplace democracy like collective bargaining, fair labour standards, right to organise and removed discriminations in employment relations.

The concept of Workplace democracy is described by Brione and Nicholson, (2012, p. 11) as the idea of giving employees a greater voice in the firms they are employed. Bendix (2007, p.654) defined it as “*industrial democracy*” which takes the form of “*increased employee participation, both in the decision making process and in profits of the undertaking.*” Exenberger and Hartmann (2007) postulated that the dawn of globalisation and technological changes cajoled firms to reorganise and flattered the need to hire improved skills and competencies. This resulted in flooding of the workplace with educated enlightened workers whose knowledge needed management to work towards involving employees in decision-making.

International Labour Organisation (ILO) moved in to ensure globally acceptable labour standards by promulgating conventions to set minimum standards of employee rights and workplace democracy (International Labour Organisation, 2003). The main four ILO conventions that are fundamental to workplace democracy are:

- Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)
- Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)
- Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)
- Abolishment of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)

Zimbabwe ratified these four main ILO conventions that afford employees right to participation and involvement on issues that affect them (Gwisai, 2006). Brione and Nicholson (2012) citing Pateman (1970) argued that there are three forms of participation namely (1) full participation, (2) partial participation, or (3) pseudo participation (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Types of employee participation approaches

Full Participation	Partial Participation	Pseudo Participation
Worker representatives have equal power to determine outcome in the decision-making process	Worker representatives influence the decision-making process but do not have equal power to decide the outcome	Participation is used by management to persuade employees to accept ready – made managerial decisions

Source: Brione & Nicholson (2012, p. 18)

With particular reference to Zimbabwe, Gwisai (2006) postulated that the decentralisation of collective bargaining in Zimbabwe by creating works councils to engage in collective bargaining pertaining to all issues affecting employees took away the right of employers to make unilateral decisions. The worker participation model of the Zimbabwean works council fit well in the description of Bendix (2007) of plant-level committees or councils which she argued are the most common and popular example of employee participation. However, collective

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bargaining agreements that come from these Works Councils are not binding on the employer as they are merely recommendations (Khabo, 2008). Decisions of the Works Council get implemented only if the employer agrees with them. In several cases, works councils are used as communicative information dissemination forums (Kanyenze, 2011).

Although globalisation entrenched workplace democracy in Zimbabwe, it also brought with it negative impacts like weakening the power of unions (Chiripanhura & Makwavarara, 2000). Works council took away union participation at workplace negotiations and in most cases workers committees enter into unfavourable decisions. In this regard, Hatcher (2007, p. 1) argued “*worker freedom have shown little sign of increasing and with globalisation of the workplace the hope of democratic workplaces for many is an unrealised dream*”. Sweeney (2004, p. 102) summed it, “*with the dawn of globalisation, democracy clearly stops at the workplace door.*”

Lee and Vivarelli (2006) argued that the decadence of workplace democracy through dissolution of union power was caused by powerful global firms which influence workplace legislation to safeguard their investments. Edwards (1997) concurred that globally networked capitalist organisations control the commercial highway. They have power over national and global economics such that their influence on workplace relations tilts employment law to their advantage to protect their business interests. In the process, workplace democracy suffers.

This development has also impacted on workplace relations in collective bargaining. Grogan (2000, p. 263) defined collective bargaining to be a process by which, “*employers and employees collectively seek to reconcile their conflicting goals through a process of mutual accommodation*”. The approach to collective bargaining by unions and workers committees has drastically changed in modern Zimbabwe. It is best described by Salamon’s (2000) cited by Bendix (2007, p. 656) as “*a philosophy or style of organisational management which recognises the need and rights of employees, individually or collectively, to be involved with management in areas of the organisation’s decision making beyond that normally covered by collective bargaining.*”

Bendix (2007) added that globalisation has changed collective bargaining and indeed the generality of worker employer workplace relations significantly due to the rise of an enlightened worker, increased skills, competences, worker self-direction and self-monitoring. These transformations have forced unions to evolve with changing times and adopted cooperation and involvement with management

through participation in higher joint decision making in order to adapt and solve global challenges affecting both employers and employees. Unfortunately, many at times the emerging workplace relations are not even. The employee does the majority of the compromises and regrettably occasioning worker marginalisation. Perhaps, the Zimbabwean employment relations situation can better be elucidated by globalisation theories discussed below.

Understanding Zimbabwe's employment relations through theory

The single causal logic theory in its quest to explain globalisation, have sought to locate a causal effect in a specific sphere of influence like political, technological or economical domain, and it is functional in nature placing human behaviours as caused by a determinant factor in the structural framework (fredda, 2015). The causal logic theory's assumptions are similar to the behaviourist psychologists' viewpoint that human actions are born from a stimulus-response paradigm. In this case, the **causal factors of globalisation** are the stimulus, which lead to **employers' business actions/decisions**, which is the response. This line of thought collaborates with Fredman's (2005) understanding of globalisation as an imposed process by forces like trade, technology and internationalisation of markets.

Applying this model in the Zimbabwean situation, it can be argued that investment by transnational companies were driven by the need to open markets, make profits and exploitation of resources, such that the actions taken by employers were more concerned with achieving business goals of profiteering as compared to improving the lives of employees (Majaya, 2018). Since the introduction of a liberalised economy in Zimbabwe in 1992, employment relations deteriorated and became synonymous with disputes and industrial actions (Knight, 2005), job losses increased (Tekere, 2001), poverty rose (Chitiga, 2004), and employers became sore controllers of the labour market (Knight, 2005).

However, the theoretical explanation given by the single causal logic theory has been widely criticised for lacking certainty in its assumption (Held, 1999). Conclusions derived from such theoretical assumptions are highly subjective as they are dependent on individuals' viewpoints. As such, the multi-causal logic theory covers this gap by taking a multivariate approach through acknowledging the diversity of structural factors contributing to globalisation and the social relations of the process.

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The multi-causal logic theory of globalisation

Macdonald (1997) argued that any theory of globalisation and employment relations that does not address work-place social relationships is inadequate. He therefore concurred with Giddens' (1990) four-dimensional model of globalisation that social relations are central in the understanding of globalisation and its impact on workplaces. The theory incorporates social relations at work and explains how each actor in the globalisation jamboree act, and interacts with the complex structural factors. As Tejada (2015) puts it, Giddens's theory proposes that globalisation unfolds in a complex interaction involving four societal dimensions namely world capitalist economy; nation state system; world military order and international division of labour as projected in Figure 1 below.

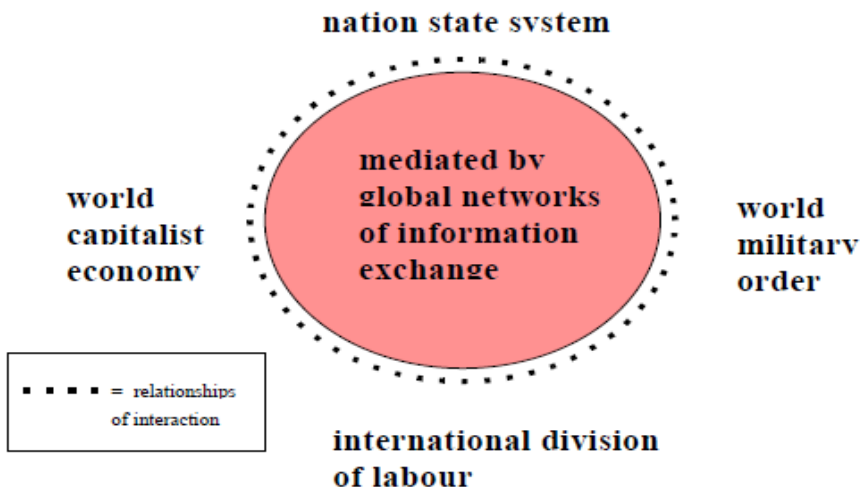


Figure 1: Giddens' four dimensional theory of globalisation

Source: Giddens, (1990).

Held and McGrew (2008) in their analysis of the four dimensional theory, concurred with Giddens (1990) that the world capitalist economy is a driver of globalisation as many national policies hovers around the interests of powerful

transnational corporations whose financial power in some cases surpass budgets of some nations. They further observed that the concept of international division of labour have forced all nations, economies and societies to depend on one another due to industrialisation. For example, resources are found in Africa, advanced technology in Europe and cheap labour in Asia (Backhaus, 2003). Therefore, there is currently massive global interdependence.

Georgantzas, Katsamakakos, and Solowiej (2010) concurred with this observation about how employers in transnational corporations affect the environments they operate in by influencing the general social life and giving pressure on governments to liberalise the labour market. They argued that as the power of transnational corporations grow with increasing influence in the world market, it affects individual citizens, labour groups and nations lose control in directing labour market policy. For example, Giddens (1990) argued that globalisation through transnational companies growth brought outsourcing and international division of labour led to rearrangement of labour markets globally and caused social unevenness. Employment has considerably grown in areas where jobs go and unemployment and poverty has increased in nations where jobs are outsourced. These developments according to Majaya (2018) have affected Zimbabwe's employment relations that have seen an increase in out-sourcing, labour broking, sub-contracting and part-time employment contracts.

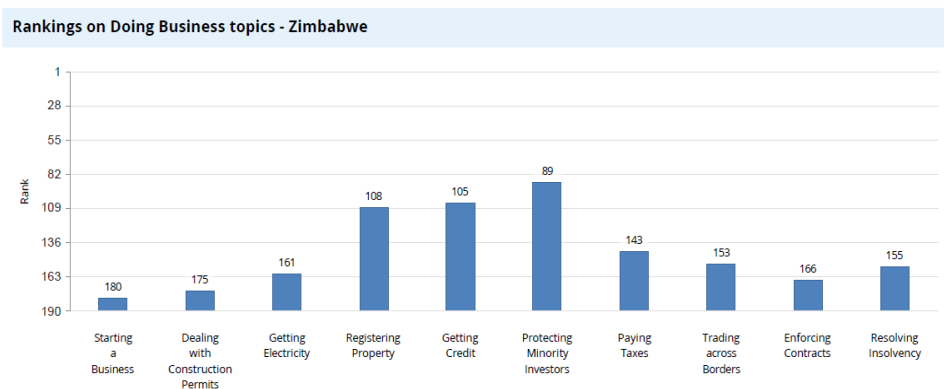
In view of this theoretical proposition, the whole spectrum of employers' influence on labour relations hovers around their massive control of the economy and its drivers. It therefore follows that the interests of employers, investors, transnational companies and international monetary organisations significantly influence the laws that nations promulgate to govern workplace relations. In fact, activities of these players to employment relations through their economic muscle over nation states lead to policy changes that directly affect human way of life across the globe (Georgantzas, Katsamakakos, & Solowiej, 2010).

In Zimbabwean, employers influence policy and labour legislation by way of collaborated effort in the Tripartite Negotiating Forum (TNF) through their associations (Mahapa & Bhembe, 2014). To date due to efforts by employers, the TNF has agreed on scrapping off development levy on companies, removal of 2.5% sales tax introduced by government in 1997 and mandated government to create an environment conducive to conduct business by reforming the labour laws, conforming to international standards, and that government pursue policies essential to successes in the global economy and ease of doing business (Kanyenze, 2011).

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In 2015, Zimbabwe adopted more labour market reforms through the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMAsset) after calls from employers and foreign investors to promote ease investment environment. Zimbabwe Government Report (2018) noted that the government has improved business-operating environment, and reduced production cost and developed ease of doing business to boost and attract investment. The government introduced six bills highlighted in Table 3.2 below in support of employers, transnational companies and investors to promote ease of business. Despite these reforms, the World Bank still rate Zimbabwe low on the ease of doing business index, rating it at 159 on the global ranking (World Bank, 2018). Table 3.3 below illustrates the Zimbabwean rankings on World Bank ranking index on ease of doing business.

Table 2: Zimbabwe ease of doing business World Bank ranking per topic



Source: World Bank (2018, p. 2).

According to Besley (2015) the World Bank require nations to make reforms on employment relations policy looking at easiest ways employees can be hired, removal of rigid working hours and protection of investors from lawsuits. The new administration led by President Emmerson Mnangagwa has embarked on improving and liberalising the labour market to lure investment (Chinamasa, 2017). The President has assured transnational companies and investors with the motto, “**Zimbabwe is open for business**” thus possibly igniting unfolding of new developments in the Zimbabwean labour market.

A synopsis of major concepts in view of current developments

In view of extant literature on globalisation and its hallmarks on employment relations in Zimbabwe and the current new political dispensation in Zimbabwe and continuous efforts underway to bring investors in the country for purposes of reindustrialisation, it is palpable that reindustrialisation may come at a cost for the proletariats if pertinent facts are not made clear. If investment is to come to Zimbabwe especially after two decades of economic sanctions from Britain, Europe and the United States, serious strides have to be made by the Mnangagwa administration towards improving the current World Bank rankings on ease of doing business (Davies, 2018). This may mean conceding to some contentious reforms, which may have varying significant effects on the labour market and general lives of employees (Campbell, 2018). Transnational companies and investors have adopted a bystander approach whilst assessing the seriousness of the new Zimbabwean administration in liberalising the labour market (Majaya, 2018).

That said, it is highly probable that as government's attention drift towards putting in place investment friendly policies, which have been accepted worldwide as liberalisation of the labour market, most of the affirmative action policies in workplace democracy, job security, labour laws and collective bargaining that have helped better employee welfare might be stifled. whenever capitalist globalisation takes a central role in directing national policy, it usually ends up with serious deregulation, unjustified capitalist profiteering, and death of unions, unemployment and poverty (Ukpere, 2009). To avoid such consequences, this study derived at two objectives namely (1) identifying current challenges occasioned by globalisation, and (2) proposing possible remedies. The following section provide the methodological steps followed to address these objectives.

This section must comprise referrals to specialized literature, compared against the paper's subject, emphasizing the most important and relevant contributions on which the author will ground his/her argumentation. In the reviewing process there shall be taken into consideration the share of referrals to papers published in international journals recognized by the scientific community. This section must stress the fact that the author is familiar with the knowledge level in the studied area, that he/she has sufficient scientific training, allowing him/her to have a pertinent opinion over the studied issues. (Times, 12)

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Research methodology

This study followed a phenomenological enquiry entrenched into an interpretivist paradigm. Data was collected using interviews, researcher field notes and participants memoirs. A sample of fourteen participants selected through a purposive sampling technique and snowballing took part in the study. Research ethics were followed and adhered to. All participants were informed adequately about their rights, purpose of the study and that their identity will be kept confidential. Voluntary informed consent forms were signed between the participant and the researcher. Interviews were semi-structured, and this allowed the participants to freely air their opinions and views whilst at the same time ensuring that the interviews followed a specific guide and standard as defined from the scope of the study and objectives. Transcript of responses were coded and analysed using both electronic data analysis system in form of Nvivo 10 and manual coding. Participants were given code names like “Ryan” in order to maintain confidentiality. These are not real participants’ names. After data coding, emerging themes were captured and supported by participants’ reflections through verbatim quotes. Steps that were followed from data collection to analysis are illustrated in Figure 1 below.

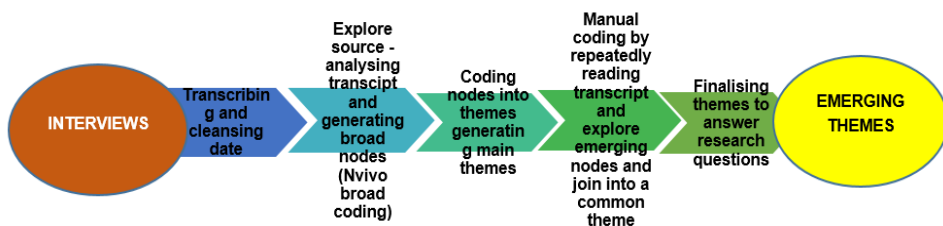


Fig. 2. Steps taken from data collection to analysis

Data presentation and discussion of findings

The objective of this article is to identify challenges posed by globalisation on employment relations in Zimbabwe and propose mechanisms to ameliorate these challenges.

Challenges occasioned by globalisation in Zimbabwean employment relations

Participants' discourses revealed a clear understanding of globalisation and its impact on employment relations as elucidated in Ryan's response who noted, "We are now looking at the workplace level where we have managers, workers committees and the works council," (Ryan, Transcript, 14 July 2019, p.3). Participants identified a number of challenges brought about by globalisation. These were grouped into six themes namely (1) strife between employers and employees (2) dwindling employee participation and democracy (3) employee marginalisation (4) increased disputes (5) general dissatisfaction from both employees and employers (6) disunity among unions and workers.

Increase disputes or strife between employers and employees

Research findings showed that employment relations between employers and employees degenerated into conflict and mistrust. Both parties harbour different interpretations and expectations from developments happening in the global community. The quote by Ray is indicative:

"I would like to believe that the relationship is now complicated. For example, you have employees comparing wages with those in developed world and surrounding countries yet the operating economic environment is different. You take for instances doctors are constantly on industrial job action requesting better condition of work similar to those given to doctors in the region and in stable economies. This has continuously put pressure on employment relations," (Ray, Transcript, 14 July 2019, p. 3).

Another participant highlighted that:

The relations at the workplace were terribly affected. Employers were subjected to massive retrenchment and job losses. Employees and unions embarked in nationwide industrial actions and collective job actions, which became rampant in the late 1990s. Government had to create the retrenchment board to ensure there is sanity. Employees saw employers as cruel whilst employers saw unions and affirmative groups as enemies of business. Law suits between the parties increased like never before as each party tried to put the other to order." (Jacob, Transcript, 27 June 2019, P. 4).

Sachikonye and Raftopoulos (2018) supported these findings and argued that globalisation led to massive changes in work environments resulting in negative effects on employment relations ultimately leading to increased disputes and rise of labour litigations. Muccheche (2017) added that, employment relations were in

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tatters, and labour wrangles increased as never before imagined. Research findings further revealed that Zimbabwean work environments have become highly “*volatile and are continuously changing*” (Mary, Transcript 12 April 2019, p 3). In cases where disputes are arising and especially involving technically skilled employees, such employees were reported to be highly prone to turnover by leaving the organisation for better conducive working environments. Jacob noted that, “*Employees are highly mobile and organisation are now required to adopt employee retention strategies and reduce conflicts and disputes at the workplace,*” (Jacob, Transcript, 27 June 2019, P. 4).

The findings have been supported by literature as Utpal and Pragma (2014) argued that globalisation has also led to high migration of skilled employees as employees continue to individually develop themselves, attain better skills and have become more informed such that organisations are also changing their strategies to ensure good work relations and conditions of service to retain such rare skills. Indeed, Zimbabwe has lost a substantive number of its skilled workforce as labour migration has become more and more prevalent due to globalisation.

Dwindling employee democracy

The results showed that globalisation has in some instances annihilated employee democracy in some industries or organisations. Emerging practices like labour brooking, subcontracting and part-time contract of employment arrangements have made it impractical for employees to organise themselves and in fact made it impossible for them to enjoy workplace democracy. In this regard, Hatcher (2007, p. 1) argued “*worker freedom have shown little sign of increasing and with globalisation of the workplace the hope of democratic workplaces for many is an unrealised dream*”. Research findings agree with literature as evidenced in Mark’s response:

“*If you look at the relationship, there is a shift currently on this issue of workers committees. In the telecoms industry and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), works councils and employee representations do not matter, in some cases they do not exist. The company in which you are doing an interview now, we do not have a workers committee. There is no need of employee representation. We do not need one. If any they do it at the broker’s offices or at the premises of the out-sourced company,*” (Mark, Transcript, 10 August 2019, p. 4).

Sweeney (2004) postulated that with the arrival of globalisation and its influence in employment relations, workplace democracy is slowly fading away

and its establishment ultimately vanishing in some organisation. Those who are still practising it, employee involvement has become more consultative meetings rather than genuine engagements and collective bargaining processes. One research participant summed it when he said *“Most of the employees we have in industries currently are predominately contract employees on fixed term contracts who do not have job security. They do not participate meaningfully in workplace collective bargaining because they are afraid their contracts may be terminated or that they will soon be out of jobs,”* (Ryan, Transcript, 14 July 2019, p. 2).

Employee marginalisation

Results identified that globalisation initiated unequal employment relations between employers and employees. As a result, the gap between employee power and workers or union power has widened at the disadvantage of the proletariat thereby causing employee marginalisation. Research findings showed that market competition was viewed as an element of globalisation that fuel employee marginalisation in Zimbabwe.

“When you operate in Zimbabwe, you will be competing with another company operating in China producing similar products. You will find issues of competitiveness in the global market coming into play to influence workplace relations. Chinese companies produce high volumes at a very low cost due to advanced technological machinery. For local companies to survive the global competition, they ignore some employee benefits and welfare to try to reduce costs to reach the competitive edge,” (Mark, Transcript, 10 August 2019, p. 5).

Mary also amplified this finding and noted, *“For example, in the manufacturing industry there is push for wages to go down. The argument is that, the market for products is the same and for Zimbabwean products to be competitive on the global market, cost of labour must go down,”* (Mary, Transcript, 12 April 2019, p. 4).

Simon added that, *“Look at the Chinese backyard companies that are here in Zimbabwe. No employee is given protective clothing, they do not have pension schemes, medical services and National Social Security Service is not there. The employees are not protected and their contract of employment is not known. There are no inspections done on such work sites because they are said to be special economic zones, they are not involved in collective bargaining, the employer pays the way he feels. They do not have trade unions or workers committees to represent their interests. Employees are exposed to hazards and disadvantages.”*

Sachikonye and Raftopoulos (2018) pointed out that Zimbabwe suffered economic sanctions and trade global isolation for nearly two decades and with

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current move towards engagement and attraction of investors, current organisations are exposed to international competition. With recent engagement efforts to lure the West to invest in Zimbabwe, the labour market has been highly liberalised (Davies, 2017) and Chinese companies have benefited tremendously from declaration of special economic zones. This has seen increased abuse of employees, breach of labour laws, low wages and increased working hours.

Disunity among unions and workers committee

Employment relations among unions and between unions and workers committee members or employees has become one of disunity and conflicts.

You would realise that the relations are strained. Most of the employees we have in industries currently are predominately contract employees on fixed term contracts who are not members of unions in their respective industries. Unions and workers committee members are disjointed. Contract employees do not have job security and in most cases they agree with their employers at workplace level behind the back of the union. (Ryan, Transcript, 14 July 2019, p. 3)

Findings from Mary added that there are now several unions in one industry and many at times unions spent majority of their time in squabbles, in-house fighting and law suits against each other. She noted, *“The ZCTU has been in active politics and there are currently more than 19 splinter unions. Critical issues regarding employee conditions are ignored as rival unions tore each other apart.”* (Mary, Transcript 12 April 2019, p. 1).

Chiripanhura and Makwavarara (2000) supported these findings and argued that in as much as globalisation brought workplace democracy in Zimbabwe, it also entrenched continued weakening of union power. Kanyenze (2011) added that Zimbabwe now have two mother unions Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions (ZFTU) and these unions struggle along political lines a scenario that has compromised employee representation and weakened union power. Subsequently, there has also been existence of several unions in each industry and these small unions are aligned either to the ZCTU or ZFTU and they do not collaborate or supplement each other but rather struggle for membership and are premised on outwitting one another (Sachikonye & Raftopoulos, 2018). This infighting has made trade unionism in Zimbabwe weak and their voice unworthy. The employees at workplace level no longer take their unions seriously as much time is spent in political unionism bickering than employee representation.

General dissatisfaction from both parties

When asked, “*Are employers and employees satisfied with the current labour relations environment in Zimbabwe in wake of globalisation?*” responses showed that both employers and employees are dissatisfied. There is general dissatisfaction and perhaps frustrations, the following quotes were used to describe the participants’ perceptions:

- *It is very difficult to say satisfied because the antagonism is still there. Clashes are going to continue and with the current economic challenges in Zimbabwe I would say no one is satisfied, (Jacob, Transcript, 27 June 2019, p. 4).*
- *Both parties are not satisfied. Employers think the current labour relations favour employees while employees feel that it favours the employer (Lucia, Journal, 10 September 2019, p. 3).*
- *Both parties are not satisfied as they accuse the labour regulations for several shortfalls (Ben, Transcript, 12 April 2019, p. 3).*
- *I do not think both parties are satisfied (Patience, Transcript, 8 May 2019, p. 3).*
- *Employers and employees are not satisfied (Sarah, Transcript, 15 September 2019, p. 3).*
- *It is not satisfying in any way (Simon, Transcript, 12 May 2019, p. 4.)*
- *On production terms there is satisfaction but legally and on relations concepts I would say no (Ray, Transcript, 14 July 2019, p. 3).*
- *I think the satisfaction is more inclined to the employer (Mark, Transcript, 10 August 2019, p. 5).*

The prevalence of dissatisfaction from both employers and employees is best explained in literature by the single causal logic theory of globalisation. Fredman (2005) argued that employees have factors arising from globalisation that cause dissatisfaction namely poor wages, non-provisions of employee democracy, long working hours, poor contracts of employment among others. At the other hand, employers are dissatisfied with issues of employee rights like high involvement of unions/workers committee in decision making, right to industrial action or strict legislations in retrenchment and employee conditions of service.

With these barrage of challenges and general dissatisfaction of parties with the labour relations environment in Zimbabwe, it is imperative that possible remedial mechanisms be proposed as outlined below to improve workplace relations

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Mechanism to address challenges of globalisation

Research findings came up with four mechanisms to address the challenges of globalisation namely, (1) contextualisation of globalisation, (2) training and education, (3) employee involvement, and (4) dialogue and communication were identified.

Contextualisation of globalisation

The need to put globalisation into context was significantly popular with interviewees. Practices from developed communities, Investors, transnational corporations and recommendations from ILO conventions and International Monetary Institutions should be in sync and harmony with local laws, values and norms. One research participant noted “*Globalisation is now dominant but we need to contextualise it within the environment in which the parties live in, that is the workplace. If you take the concepts being ushered by globalisation in its totality there will be conflict and to mitigate these conflicts there should be effective engagement,*” (Patience, Transcript, 8 May 2019, p. 4).

Legislative responsibility of government was identified as a central component in ensuring promulgation of laws that bring globalisation into context and in line with local requirements. “*Government should correctly interpret global trends and not to put unnecessary pressure on employers and employees*” (Ray, Transcript, 14 July 2019, p. 4). Further findings were that the Labour Act should cover majority of aspects that are imported through globalisation, for example, Special economic Zones, Outsourcing/labour broking, maternity leave, Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and informal businesses. Hence, “*Each and every legal framework should be assessed in its totality and the Labour Act should speak to each policy whether it is a borrowed concept or domestic policy,* (Ryan, Transcript, 14 July 2019, p. 5)”.

Workplace policies in Human Resources Management (HRM) particularly those in transnational corporations require to be in line with local laws. Jacob, an interviewee who works for a transnational company noted that, in his organisation they have desisted from forcing HRM policies on companies, instead, they have encouraged blending of the policies with local laws. Findings encouraged employers to implement management tools like total quality management to balance the needs of the company through (1) efficiency, (2) quality products, (3) avoiding reworks, (3) avoid unnecessary expenses like injuries, and (4) desist from trying to achieve global competitive edge by reducing employees’ wages and conditions of service.

Training and education

Participants generally agreed that investment and effort should be put both at organisational and national level to train employees and employers on globalisation and its challenges. Findings showed that employers have implemented a number of training methods including exposing employees to global trends through conferences, exchange programs with sister companies in transnational corporations, in-house training, recruitment of immigrants, skills development to equip employees to adapt to technological changes and avail reading materials like policies, newsletter and pamphlets.

According to one participant, trade unions “*rolled out training exercises across the country working together with employers to educate employees and managers on globalisation,*” (Ryan, Transcript, 14 July 2019, p. 5). Results proved that the unions have invested much on educating what globalisation is, the import of labour market flexibility, casualisation of labour, fixed term contracts and labour broking. However, unions felt this is not enough and noted that the government can do more by embracing globalisation and sharing information with unions and employers.

Involving employees

The involvement of employees in decision making and devising of solution to address challenges of globalisation stood out as a critical method in achieving workplace harmony. Kuda one of the research participants and a president of one of the leading labour movements in Zimbabwe noted, “*This concept influenced co-determination in Germany where employees were encouraged to come up with solutions to problems.*” The following quote from Jacob illuminated the concept of employee involvement:

“We also use high level employee involvement. We have taught our employees and worker representatives that they should not always come with a list of problems, but for each problem that they raise to management they should put down their proposed solutions which should be in line with business values and principles,” (Jacob, Transcript, 27 June 2019, p. 4).

There is need for employers to be sincere in their approach and implementation of employee involvement and participation programs. Brione and Nicholson (2012) citing Pateman (1970) came up with three forms of participation namely (1) full participation, (2) partial participation, or (3) pseudo participation. It is strongly recommended that effort should be put in moving towards full participation rather than window dressing forms of employee involvement.

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Dialogue and communication

Multiple respondents viewed dialogue and communication as a critical strategy that can be used to address challenges of globalisation. *“My view which I still hold up to now, is that, negotiations is the only key to a common solution and for the common good,”* (Kuda, Transcript, 12 June 2019, p. 4). Study results identified three levels of engagement where negotiations can be conducted in order to deal with globalisation and its impact on employment relations.

- National level negotiations in the Tripartite Negotiating Forum (TNF)
- Industry level negotiations in the National Employment Council
- Workplace level negotiations in the works council

In the Tripartite Negotiating Forum (TNF), employers’ associations, unions and government join up in purposeful dialogue and there is an opportunity to address vast issues affecting employment relations namely establishment of national social security and amendments to the Labour Act. Ryan noted that the TNF is vital in giving direction to the national policies regarding labour administration and that all social partners should be involved in policy formulation to ensure each party’s concerns are covered. He noted:

“When we talk of industrial relations we are talking of partnership between government, labour and business. If government think of coming up with policies and new laws, there should be extensive engagement with unions and business,” (Ryan, Transcript, 14 July 2019, p. 5).

TNF is highly influential in social dialogue and findings strongly recommended the social partners to legalise the TNF through an enactment of Parliament so that its decision become legally binding on the parties.

However, one respondent (Kuda) although he was agreeable to the importance of the TNF and its role in social dialogue at national level, he was opposed to its legislation to become a legal board. He noted, *“Contrary to my view, they are setting it before parliament. My view is that you cannot legislate love in order for people to love one another. You educate people to live by love of one another”* (Kuda, Transcript, 12 June 2019, p. 4).

Regarding industry level negotiations, findings showed that National Employment Councils (NECs) are involved in setting conditions of service and codes of conduct for their respective industries and agreements are published through Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs). For example, in addressing the challenge of casualisation of labour and fixed-term contracts the NEC for Food Industry, *“...entered into an agreement with employers to have employees who will*

have worked for a year and above to be engaged on permanent basis,” (Ryan, Transcript, 14 July 2019, p. 5). Research participants noted that CBAs should always be compatible with the Labour Act and national policy. The Ministry responsible for Labour Administration verify and ratify the agreements to ensure compliance with national laws and policies.

At the workplace level, it was observed that policy communications and feedback are carried out in the works council through dialogue between management and workers committee members. Each party’s interests are shared in the works council through negotiations in good faith and the parties are able to work out their differences. Effective communication was identified to be of great importance in making employees and employers understand each other’s side of the story before implementing any changes inspired by globalisation. Ray, an interviewee and Human Resources Officer shared his experiences through an interview extract below on how his organisation had managed to handle changes brought in by technology using communication and engagement with employees.

Interviewer: At the workplace level, what do you think the employer and employees should do to address challenges of globalisation?

Ray

The problem with employees is that of high expectations. Employees should be made to moderate their expectations considering the capacity of their companies through effective communication by management. For employers as they adopt new trends of technology or changes in the organisation it should not come as a surprise to employees. Communication and collective action is the only way to go if there is to be successful managing of challenges posed by globalisation.

Interviewer: From your previous experience, either as an individual or in practice, what strategies have you implemented to address the challenges posed by globalisation in the area of employment relations.

Ray

We have introduced artificial intelligence in our automation systems such that our employees are well informed and educated on the new changes and those affected were advised well in time. Even when we introduced the biometrics system, we engaged employees and informed them on how the new system works. The process saw the retrenchment of human resources clerks and we advised them and gave them enough time to prepare. We informed them of these developments before implementation.

Fig. 3. Field work, participant’s response

Source: Author’s Fieldwork (Ray, Transcript, 14 July 2019, p. 4)

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The findings showed that collaborated effort and in-depth dialoguing and communication between the parties to the employment relations system is essential in addressing challenges of globalisation at the workplace level.

Recommendations

Globalisation has become a dominant issue in work organisation and quite unpopular with employees because of changes it occasioned such as deregulation, liberalisation, and casualization of labour, retrenchments, downsizing, rightsizing, mergers and acquisitions. As such, the below recommendations are necessary to assist Zimbabwean organisations, investors and their managers to develop better human resources policies and organisational strategies that addresses challenges posed by globalisation.

Willingness to build a collaborative labour relations culture

There is need for employers and employees to constantly assess the challenges posed by globalisation in Zimbabwe and make organisational introspections regarding the nature of employment relations prevailing at their respective workplaces. It is pertinent to figure out whether the existing employment relations in an organisation is one that is predominately of strife or collaboration with workers. The burden regarding the nature of labour relations prevailing in any organisation rests to a greater extent on the shoulders of the managers as they are the ones who design workplace policies, procedures and human resources manuals.

Unions and employees just like their employers are also accountable for the ensuing employment relations culture at their respective workplaces. In fact, each work environment face different challenges and there is no single prescription in dealing with such challenges. Both employers and employees should be committed in building a positive employment relations culture through collective bargaining, dialoguing and mutual communication of issues of interest.

Institutionalise industrial democracy at all workplaces

Each Zimbabwean workplace should have basics that build the main ethos of a sound labour relations environment by affording employee participation through workers committees, collective bargaining, and involving employees in discussing challenges posed by globalisation and collectively work with them to find solutions. For example, it is not only unfair but unethical for employees to become aware after a merger has already been completed. Companies in Zimbabwe that are

involved with outsourcing, labour brokering and those in special economic zones should at least afford employees basic rights like employee representation through workers committees in order to ensure that employee concerns reach management.

Workplace democracy is a fundamental employee right, which regardless of whether an organisation operates under a special economic zone, uses outsourcing or not, such global rights are absolute to the extent that an employee should enjoy them. According to the Zimbabwean Labour Act, employees should be able to advise their employers regarding unsafe workplaces, health threatening work environments and any other work-related issues that affect them through a workers committee. The Zimbabwean government through the Ministry of Labour should therefore investigate these emerging issues and ensure that all workplaces in Zimbabwe comply with the basic dictates of the Labour Act.

A need to put globalisation factors into context

It is imperative for employers, employees and trade unions to identify and understand the effects of globalisation at workplace level in the Zimbabwean context. Employers should desist from coping and pasting developments in the global community through imposing policies that adversely affect employees' welfare without prior information or education on such policies. Rather, consultative efforts should be done, the pros and cons of such new ventures identified and employees should be informed of such major changes to ensure that all contexture effects are assessed.

Similarly, Zimbabwe as a country should not blindly implement recommendations coming from the globalisers without projecting possible impact on labour relations and perhaps the misalignment of such new prescriptions to the Zimbabwean Labour Act. A good example is the establishment of special economic zones, which this study's findings observed that they breach the Labour Act in every respect and lead to employee exploitation. There is need to work towards ensuring that current employees in the Zimbabwean labour market who are not covered by the bulk of the provisions in the Labour Act are incorporated through crafting of new proviso that cover outsourcing, labour brokering, fixed-term and casual contracts in the Zimbabwean Labour Act.

A need for training, education and informed representation from unions/worker representatives rather than radicalism

Globalisation has left a big mark in employment relations by introducing concepts like workplace democracy and worker rights. Similarly it has also

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unleashed quite a sophisticated work environment, one with automation, global competition, ease of doing business conditions, investor superiority and dominance of capitalism, which elements have swept off the fit of unions and worker representatives from old school practices of radicalism. This study's findings showed that the challenges occasioned by globalisation on employment relations have pointed to more pronounced adverse effects on employees. Now that, unions and employees in Zimbabwe are well informed of this uneven ground, they should therefore invest in a lot of training and education. Employees and unions need to gather as much information and knowledge as possible on all aspects of interest as they relate with global factors in order to have their facts and arguments right. If they are to stand a better chance in discussing better deals with their employers at the workplace level, they need to create a more informed employee and negotiator. Gone are the days where worker representation was appointed in terms of one's arrogance or antagonism with management. The contemporary work environment requires a more constructively contributing and convincingly arguing employee to negotiate and match with mostly well qualified experienced management team representing employers at the negotiating table.

Government and Ministry responsible for labour administration to carry out employment relations inspections

The government though the Ministry responsible for labour administration need to accelerate its inspection responsibilities on workplaces and not to ultimately delegate these to National Employment Councils (NECs). The Ministry should formulate national standards in workplace democracy and ensure these are followed. Perhaps, punitive measures are required in legislation for those companies or individuals who breach employment relations standards. Serious efforts should be directed to ensuring that workplaces are not perverters of workers marginalisation. The onus rest on government as the regulator of national labour laws to ensure a fair globalisation is attained and achieved in workplace relations.

Conclusion

This article managed to identify that globalisation has brought challenges and changes to Zimbabwean employment relations. The majority of the identified challenges had had massive effects on employees as compared to their impact on employers. Generally, both employers and employees reported unhappy with the current employment relations. The study identified mitigating factors that can help

to ameliorate the adverse impact of globalisation on employment relations. Lastly, the study proffered recommendations that need to be considered in an effort to address challenges posed by globalisation.

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