

Evaluating the Contributions of Trade Unions on Employee Welfare at Levy Mwanawasa Medical University.

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ABSTRACT

Trade unions play a vital role in promoting employee welfare through collective bargaining, employee representation, and advocacy for improved employment conditions. Despite their significance, limited empirical evidence exists on their contribution to employee welfare within Zambia's public higher learning institutions. This study evaluated the contribution of trade unions to employee welfare at Levy Mwanawasa Medical University (LMMU), with specific emphasis on their role in improving employees' working conditions and promoting workplace benefits. The study employed a case study research design within a convergent mixed-methods framework. The target population comprised 540 academic and non-academic employees from the Lusaka and Kabwe campuses, from which a sample of 230 respondents was determined using the Yamane formula. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires and analysed using descriptive statistics in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), while qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed thematically. The findings revealed that 84.8% of respondents agreed that trade unions had contributed to improving employees' working conditions by promoting safer and fairer workplaces. Additionally, 83.9% acknowledged that trade unions played an important role in negotiating workplace benefits, including salaries, allowances, and employee welfare support, while 82.6% expressed satisfaction with the services provided by the trade union. The study concludes that trade unions are important institutional partners in enhancing employee welfare at LMMU through improvements in working conditions and workplace benefits. It recommends strengthening collaboration between university management and trade unions, improving communication during collective bargaining processes, and enhancing member engagement to ensure that negotiated benefits are effectively implemented and equitably experienced by all employees.

Keywords: Trade unions, employee welfare, working conditions, workplace benefits, collective bargaining, Levy Mwanawasa Medical University.

INTRODUCTION

Trade Union have for many years been key facet of the industry since the industrial revolution. They have played a key role in promoting employee welfare by leveling the field for workers by providing a unionised force in negotiations such things as wages, working conditions, occupational health and safety, employee benefits, and workplace rights through collective bargaining and social dialogue(Kelly, 2015). Employee welfare doesn't stop at financial compensation for worker, but include career progression, equal benefits for all, safe working environment, healthcare, pension schemes, professional development, work-life balance, and overall employee wellbeing, all of which contribute to higher job satisfaction, motivation, and organisational performance(Armstrong & Taylor, 2023).This makes trade unions widely recognised as a crucial partner in the improvement of the quality of the workers life.

In higher education institutions such as Levy Mwanawasa Medical University, employee welfare not least important due to the standing on such as institution in preparing the country's medical students, the quality of academic and non-academic staff's work life has an effect of the quality of medical students offloaded into Zambia's hospitals, pharmacies and clinics. Thus, delivering quality of teaching, research, and service delivery is crucial beyond the gates of the Lusaka and Kabwe campuses. Trade unions such as Levy Mwanawasa Medical University Lecturers and Researchers Union (LMMULARU) can improve the level of products (medical

personnel) can be improved through collective bargaining, grievance handling, and employee representation, trade unions help create favourable working conditions that enhance employee commitment and institutional effectiveness (Gahan, Pekarek, & Nicholson, 2021).

Zambia protects and regulates the existence of trade unions through various charters and legal framework's such as Industrial and Labour Relations Act which helps advocacy for the enhancement of employment conditions and by extension welfare. However, existing studies have largely focused on the mining sector and the broader public service, with limited attention given to public universities (Baker, Halberstam, Kroft, Mas, & Messacar, 2026).

Thus, LMMU is an ideal location and institution structure for examination of the influence trade unions have on the welfare of employees at a higher institution of learning. Despite, the importance of LMMUARU in representing more than 500 employees in matters key to their welfare and conditions of service. There is very little in the way of empirical evidence on the extent to which its role has improved their welfare in the institution. This study therefore evaluates the contribution of trade unions to employee welfare at LMMU, with the aim of generating evidence that can inform institutional policies and strengthen employee welfare practices in public higher education institutions.

General Objective

- ❖ To evaluate the contributions of trade unions to employee welfare at Levy Mwanawasa Medical University.

Specific Objectives

- ❖ To examine the contributions of trade unions to improving employees' working conditions.
- ❖ To assess the role of trade unions in promoting workplace benefits at LMMU.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Contributions of Trade Unions to Improving Employees' Working Conditions

Global Perspective

Trade unions have historically played a central role in improving employees' working conditions through collective bargaining, workplace representation, and advocacy for safe and equitable employment practices. Globally, collective bargaining has enabled employees to negotiate for improved occupational health and safety standards, reasonable working hours, fair workloads, and enhanced job security. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2022), effective trade unions contribute to decent work by promoting safe working environments, fair labour standards, and compliance with labour legislation. Similarly, Lever and James (1987) argue that unionised employees generally experience better working conditions and greater employment protection than non-unionised workers because trade unions provide a collective voice in negotiating workplace policies. However, Fink (2013) contends that improvements in working conditions negotiated through trade unions may increase labour costs and reduce organisational flexibility, particularly where employers face financial constraints. Despite this criticism, empirical evidence largely supports the view that trade unions contribute significantly to improving employees' working conditions while promoting industrial harmony.

Regional Perspective

Across Africa, trade unions continue to play an important role in improving working conditions despite operating in increasingly challenging labour markets. In Namibia, Ndeva and Tjipangandjara (2023) found that trade union representation contributed to safer workplaces, predictable work schedules, improved leave arrangements, and greater employee participation in workplace decision-making. These improvements enhanced employee satisfaction and workplace wellbeing. Likewise, the International Labour Organization (2022) recognises collective bargaining as an effective mechanism for promoting occupational safety, fair working conditions, and decent employment standards across developing economies. These studies demonstrate that trade unions remain important institutions for improving employees' working conditions throughout the African region.

Zambia Perspective

In Zambia, improving working conditions remains one of the primary functions of trade unions. Phiri (2013) observes that trade unions negotiate with employers to improve workplace safety, working hours, employment security, and general conditions of service through collective bargaining. Similarly, Mulenga (2011) notes that public sector unions actively engage government institutions in negotiations aimed at improving employees' working environments and ensuring compliance with labour standards. Although these studies demonstrate the importance of trade unions in promoting favourable working conditions, they have largely focused on the mining industry and the broader public service. Consequently, there is limited empirical evidence regarding how trade unions contribute to improving employees' working conditions within public higher learning institutions such as Levy Mwanawasa Medical University.

Knowledge Gap

The reviewed literature consistently demonstrates that trade unions contribute to improving employees' working conditions through collective bargaining, workplace representation, and advocacy for safe and equitable employment practices. However, most global and regional studies focus on industrial and private-sector organisations, while Zambian studies concentrate predominantly on mining and public service institutions. Consequently, there is limited empirical evidence regarding the contribution of trade unions to improving employees' working conditions within public higher learning institutions. This study addresses this gap by examining the contribution of trade unions to improving employees' working conditions at LMMU.

Role of Trade Unions in Promoting Workplace Benefits

Global Perspective

Trade unions contribute significantly to promoting workplace benefits by negotiating improved salaries, health insurance, pension schemes, paid leave, educational assistance, and other employee welfare programmes. Yin (2018) found that unionised employees generally receive higher earnings, accumulate greater wealth, and enjoy better employment benefits than non-unionised workers. Similarly, Saunders (2019) argues that trade unions improve employees' access to healthcare, retirement benefits, and educational support through collective bargaining agreements. These negotiated benefits contribute to improved employee wellbeing, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment.

Regional Perspective

Within Africa, trade unions continue to advocate for workplace benefits that improve employees' quality of life. Ndeva and Tjipangandjara (2023) found that unionised employees benefited from paid leave, social protection, improved remuneration, and enhanced participation in organisational decision-making. Similarly, the Caribbean Congress of Labour (2016) maintains that trade unions strengthen employees' bargaining power by negotiating improved employment benefits and social protection measures. These findings demonstrate that workplace benefits remain an important outcome of effective trade union representation across developing economies.

Zambia Perspective

In Zambia, trade unions promote workplace benefits through collective bargaining and employee welfare programmes. Phiri (2013) notes that trade unions provide legal representation, financial assistance, welfare support, and advocacy for improved salaries and employment benefits. Likewise, Mulenga (2011) observes that public sector unions negotiate for enhanced allowances, pensions, medical support, and other employment benefits on behalf of employees. The Mine Workers Union of Zambia has similarly provided assistance relating to sickness, disability, workplace accidents, and labour disputes. Despite these contributions, available studies have focused mainly on mining and public service organisations, leaving public universities largely unexplored.

Knowledge Gap

Existing literature demonstrates that trade unions play an important role in promoting workplace benefits through collective bargaining and employee welfare programmes. However, available studies have focused largely on

private-sector organisations, mining companies, and the broader public service, with limited attention to public higher learning institutions. Consequently, there is insufficient empirical evidence regarding the role of trade unions in promoting workplace benefits within universities. This study seeks to address this gap by assessing the role of trade unions in promoting workplace benefits at LMMU.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a case study research design within a convergent mixed-methods framework. The convergent mixed-methods design involved the concurrent collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, after which the findings were integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the contribution of trade unions to employee welfare at LMMU. The case study design was considered appropriate because it enabled an in-depth examination of the phenomenon within its real-life institutional context. Quantitative data provided measurable evidence on employees' perceptions, while qualitative data offered detailed insights into participants' experiences. The integration of both approaches enhanced the validity and credibility of the findings through methodological triangulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2018).

Study Population and Sample Size

The target population comprised 540 academic and non-academic employees of LMMU, drawn from the Lusaka and Kabwe campuses. The population consisted of 500 employees from the Lusaka Campus and 40 employees from the Kabwe Campus. The inclusion of employees from both campuses ensured that respondents had direct experience with trade union activities, employee welfare programmes, and workplace conditions.

Table 1: Target Population

Category	Population
Lusaka Campus Employees	500
Kabwe Campus Employees	40
Total	540

Source: Levy Mwanawasa Medical University Human Resource Records (2025).

The sample size was determined using the **Yamane (1967)** formula at a **5% margin of error**:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

- n = Sample size
- N = Population size (540)
- e = Margin of error (0.05)

Substituting the values:

$$\begin{aligned}
 n &= \frac{540}{1 + 540(0.05)^2} \\
 n &= \frac{540}{1 + 540(0.0025)} \\
 n &= \frac{540}{2.35} \\
 n &= 229.79 \approx 230
 \end{aligned}$$

Accordingly, a sample size of 230 respondents was used in the study. Quantitative respondents were selected through simple random sampling, while purposive sampling was employed to select key informants for the qualitative interviews.

Statistical Analysis

Quantitative data were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were used to summarise respondents' perceptions of the contribution of trade unions to improving employees' working conditions and promoting workplace benefits. The findings were presented using tables to facilitate interpretation. Qualitative data obtained through semi-structured interviews were analysed thematically by identifying and categorising recurring themes corresponding to the study objectives. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provided a comprehensive interpretation of the contribution of trade unions to employee welfare at LMMU.

FINDINGS

Quantitative Analysis

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 230)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	81	35.2
	Female	149	64.8
	Total	230	100.0
Age (Years)	20–29	60	26.1
	30–39	66	28.7
	40–49	59	25.7
	50 and above	45	19.6
	Total	230	100.0
Length of Employment at LMMU	Less than 1 year	38	16.5
	1–3 years	38	16.5
	4–6 years	52	22.6
	7–10 years	54	23.5
	More than 10 years	48	20.9
	Total	230	100.0

Source: Field Data (2026).

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Female employees constituted the majority of the respondents (64.8%), while males accounted for 35.2%. The largest age group was 30–39 years (28.7%), followed by respondents aged 20–29 years (26.1%), 40–49 years (25.7%), and 50 years and above (19.6%). Regarding length of employment, the largest proportion of respondents (23.5%) had worked at Levy Mwanawasa Medical University for 7–10 years, followed by those with 4–6 years of service (22.6%) and more than 10 years (20.9%). Employees with less than one year and 1–3 years of service each accounted for 16.5% of the sample. Overall, the demographic profile indicates that the study captured views from respondents with diverse backgrounds in terms of gender, age, and work experience, thereby enhancing the representativeness and credibility of the findings.

Contribution of Trade Unions to Improving Employees' Working Conditions

Table 1: Trade Unions' Contribution to Improving Working Conditions

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	132	57.4
Agree	63	27.4

Neutral	17	7.4
Disagree	12	5.2
Strongly Disagree	6	2.6
Total	230	100.0

Source: Field Data (2026).

Survey responses indicate a strong perception that trade unions play an important role in improving working conditions at LMMU. A significant majority of respondents (84.8%) either strongly agreed or agreed that trade unions contribute positively to creating safer, fairer, and more supportive working environments. This finding suggests that employees recognise the role of trade unions in advocating for improved workplace standards, occupational safety, and favourable employment conditions that enhance employee wellbeing and job satisfaction.

The findings further indicate that trade unions are viewed as effective representatives in addressing workplace concerns affecting employees' welfare and conditions of service. Improved working conditions are likely to promote employee motivation, organisational commitment, and productivity, thereby contributing to improved institutional performance. Nevertheless, 7.4% of respondents remained neutral, while 7.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting that some employees have not directly experienced improvements arising from trade union interventions or believe that certain workplace challenges remain unresolved. These findings underscore the need for continued engagement between trade unions, management, and employees to sustain improvements in working conditions.

Role of Trade Unions in Promoting Workplace Benefits at LMMU

Table 2: Trade Unions Contribute to Workplace Benefits

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	121	52.6
Agree	72	31.3
Neutral	19	8.3
Disagree	13	5.7
Strongly Disagree	5	2.1
Total	230	100.0

Source: Field Data (2026).

The findings reveal that employees hold favourable perceptions regarding the role of trade unions in promoting workplace benefits. A substantial majority of respondents (83.9%) either strongly agreed or agreed that trade unions play an important role in negotiating workplace benefits such as salaries, allowances, and employee welfare support. This reflects a high level of confidence in the ability of trade unions to represent employees' interests during negotiations with management and to advocate for improved employment benefits.

The positive responses suggest that collective bargaining has produced tangible improvements in remuneration, employee welfare programmes, and other employment benefits. However, 8.3% of respondents remained neutral, while 7.8% expressed disagreement, indicating that some employees may not have directly benefited from trade union negotiations or may perceive that negotiated outcomes have not fully met their expectations. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening communication regarding collective bargaining outcomes and ensuring greater inclusiveness in the negotiation process.

Table 3: Employees' Satisfaction with Trade Union Services

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Satisfied	118	51.3
Satisfied	72	31.3

Neutral	19	8.3
Dissatisfied	15	6.5
Very Dissatisfied	6	2.6
Total	230	100.0

Source: Field Data (2026).

Employees generally expressed favourable views regarding the services provided by trade unions at LMMU. More than four-fifths of respondents (82.6%) reported being either very satisfied or satisfied with the services offered by their trade unions, indicating a high level of confidence in the unions' ability to represent employees' interests and promote workplace benefits.

The high satisfaction levels suggest that employees perceive trade unions as effective in fulfilling their responsibilities, including collective bargaining, grievance handling, employee representation, and advocacy for improved workplace benefits. This positive assessment reinforces the role of trade unions in enhancing employee welfare within the institution. However, while 8.3% of respondents remained neutral, 9.1% reported dissatisfaction, suggesting that some employees believe their welfare concerns have not been adequately addressed or that trade union services could be more responsive. These findings indicate opportunities for trade unions to strengthen member engagement, improve communication, and enhance service delivery to ensure that workplace benefits are equitably experienced by all employees.

Qualitative Analysis

Contributions of Trade Unions on Employer and Employee Benefits

Table 4 Contribution of Trade Unions

ID	Response	Theme
P1	Trade unions negotiate for better salaries and allowances for workers.	Salary and wage improvement
P2	They help employees access better working conditions and benefits.	Improved working conditions
P3	Trade unions advocate for medical and housing allowances.	Employee welfare benefits
P4	They ensure employees receive fair promotions and incentives.	Fair promotion practices
P5	Trade unions contribute to job security among workers.	Job security
P6	They help management maintain a motivated workforce.	Workforce motivation
P7	Trade unions improve productivity because employees become satisfied.	Increased productivity
P8	They negotiate for leave days and overtime compensation.	Employee compensation
P9	Trade unions help create fairness in benefit distribution.	Equity and fairness
P10	Employers benefit because industrial disputes are minimized.	Reduced industrial conflict
P11	Trade unions encourage employee commitment to the institution.	Employee commitment
P12	They improve staff morale through better conditions of service.	Employee morale
P13	Trade unions help employees understand their rights and benefits.	Employee awareness
P14	They ensure employees are compensated fairly for their work.	Fair compensation
P15	Trade unions help create a stable and productive work environment.	Organisational stability

The qualitative findings indicate that respondents perceive trade unions as playing a significant role in improving employee welfare while enhancing organisational stability. Participants consistently highlighted the unions' contribution to negotiating better salaries, allowances, and working conditions. As one participant noted,

“Trade unions negotiate for better salaries and allowances for workers” (P1),

while another stated,

“They help employees access better working conditions and benefits” (P2). These responses suggest that trade unions are viewed as effective advocates for employees' economic and welfare interests.

Another prominent theme was workplace fairness and employee protection. Respondents indicated that trade unions promote equitable treatment through fair promotions, compensation, and benefit distribution. For example, one participant remarked,

“They ensure employees receive fair promotions and incentives” (P4),

while another observed,

“Trade unions help create fairness in benefit distribution” (P9). These findings demonstrate that trade unions strengthen employees' trust in organisational processes by promoting fairness and transparency.

Participants also associated trade union activities with improved motivation, commitment, and organisational performance. One respondent explained,

“They help management maintain a motivated workforce” (P6),

while another stated,

“Employers benefit because industrial disputes are minimized” (P10).

Furthermore, respondents emphasised the educational role of trade unions, with one participant noting,

“Trade unions help employees understand their rights and benefits” (P13).

The findings suggest that trade unions contribute to improved employee welfare, workplace harmony, and sustainable employer–employee relations through effective representation, advocacy, and conflict reduction.

DISCUSSION

Contribution of Trade Unions to Improving Employees' Working Conditions

The study established that trade unions make a significant contribution to improving employees' working conditions at LMMU, with 84.8% of respondents agreeing that trade unions have positively influenced workplace conditions. This finding suggests that employees perceive trade unions as effective representatives in advocating for safer workplaces, fair employment practices, improved occupational health and safety, and favourable conditions of service. The high level of agreement further indicates that collective bargaining has translated into practical improvements that enhance employee wellbeing, motivation, and organisational commitment.

These findings are consistent with the International Labour Organization (2022), which argues that trade unions contribute to decent work by promoting safe working environments, equitable labour standards, and compliance with labour legislation. Similarly, Kelly (2015) maintains that trade unions strengthen employees' bargaining power through collective representation, enabling workers to influence workplace policies and negotiate improved working conditions. The findings also corroborate those of Ndeva and Tjipangandjara (2023), who found that trade union representation in Namibia improved workplace safety, predictable work schedules, and employee participation in organisational decision-making. Likewise, Phiri (2013) observed that trade unions in Zambia contribute to improving workplace safety, employment security, and conditions of service through collective bargaining.

The findings extend the existing literature by providing empirical evidence from a public higher learning institution, an area that has received limited scholarly attention in Zambia. Previous studies have largely concentrated on mining companies and the wider public sector, with little focus on universities. The present findings therefore demonstrate that trade unions remain effective institutional mechanisms for improving working conditions within higher education institutions, thereby addressing an important contextual gap identified in the literature.

Despite the overwhelmingly positive perceptions, a small proportion of respondents expressed neutral or negative views, suggesting that improvements in working conditions may not be experienced equally across all employee

categories. This finding may reflect differences in employees' expectations, implementation challenges, or variations in the extent to which negotiated improvements are realised across departments. Consequently, trade unions and university management should strengthen consultation mechanisms and monitor the implementation of negotiated agreements to ensure that improvements in working conditions benefit all employees.

Roles of Trade Unions in Promoting Workplace Benefits at LMMU

The study further established that trade unions play a significant role in promoting workplace benefits, with 83.9% of respondents acknowledging that trade unions effectively negotiate salaries, allowances, and employee welfare benefits. Additionally, more than four-fifths (82.6%) of respondents reported satisfaction with the services provided by the trade union, indicating confidence in its ability to represent employees and advocate for improved welfare. The qualitative findings reinforce these results, with participants stating, “Trade unions negotiate for better salaries and allowances for workers” (P1), “*Trade unions advocate for medical and housing allowances*” (P3), and “*They negotiate for leave days and overtime compensation*” (P8). Another respondent added, “*They ensure employees are compensated fairly for their work*” (P14). These responses demonstrate that employees perceive trade unions as instrumental in securing workplace benefits and enhancing their overall welfare through collective bargaining.

These findings support Yin (2018), who found that unionised employees generally receive higher earnings and better employment benefits than non-unionised workers because of effective collective bargaining. Similarly, Saunders (2019) argues that trade unions improve employees' access to healthcare, retirement benefits, educational assistance, and other welfare programmes that enhance employee wellbeing. The findings are also consistent with the OECD (2019), which recognises collective bargaining as an important mechanism for improving employment benefits and reducing workplace inequalities. Within the African context, Ndeva and Tjipangandjara (2023) similarly found that trade unions contribute to improved remuneration, paid leave, and social protection, while Phiri (2013) observed that Zambian trade unions actively negotiate for improved salaries and employment benefits through collective bargaining.

The findings extend the existing body of knowledge by demonstrating that the contribution of trade unions to workplace benefits is equally evident within a public medical university. The qualitative evidence further shows that improved employee benefits contribute to commitment and organisational stability. As one participant remarked, “Trade unions encourage employee commitment to the institution” (P11), while another observed, “Trade unions help create a stable and productive work environment” (P15). While previous studies have concentrated on mining and public service institutions, this study provides institution-specific evidence that trade unions contribute to employee welfare within higher education by securing workplace benefits and promoting employee satisfaction.

However, the presence of respondents who expressed dissatisfaction indicates that not all employees perceive workplace benefits to be equitably distributed or adequately communicated. This may reflect unmet expectations, delays in implementing negotiated agreements, or insufficient communication regarding collective bargaining outcomes. Consequently, trade union leadership should strengthen communication with members, improve transparency during negotiations, and engage employees more actively throughout the bargaining process to enhance trust, satisfaction, and the effective implementation of negotiated employee benefits.

Implications for Research and Practice

The findings have important implications for industrial relations within public higher education institutions. For university management, the results demonstrate that constructive engagement with trade unions can improve employees' working conditions and workplace benefits, thereby strengthening employee morale, organisational commitment, and institutional performance. For trade unions, the findings highlight the importance of maintaining effective collective bargaining, transparent communication, and continuous engagement with members to ensure that negotiated benefits are understood and equitably implemented.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings support Collective Bargaining Theory, which argues that collective negotiation enables employees to secure improved employment conditions and welfare outcomes. They also

reinforce Labour Process Theory by demonstrating that trade unions contribute to improving workplace conditions that positively influence employee motivation and organisational effectiveness.

Study Limitations

The study was limited to LMMU and therefore reflects the experiences of employees within a single public higher learning institution. Consequently, the findings cannot be readily generalised to all universities or organisations in Zambia. In addition, the use of descriptive statistics limited the study to explaining employees' perceptions rather than establishing causal relationships between trade union activities and employee welfare outcomes. Furthermore, employees' responses may have been influenced by personal experiences and perceptions of trade union effectiveness.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies should employ inferential statistical techniques to examine the relationship between trade union activities and specific employee welfare outcomes. Comparative studies involving multiple public and private universities would provide broader evidence on the effectiveness of trade unions across higher education institutions. Longitudinal research could also investigate how trade union interventions influence employee welfare over time, while qualitative studies may explore employees' lived experiences of collective bargaining and workplace benefit programmes in greater depth.

CONCLUSION

This study evaluated the contribution of trade unions to employee welfare at LMMU by examining their role in improving employees' working conditions and promoting workplace benefits. The findings demonstrate that trade unions make a significant contribution to employee welfare through collective bargaining, employee representation, and advocacy for favourable employment conditions. Employees generally perceived trade unions as effective in securing improvements in working conditions, including safer and fairer workplaces, while also negotiating workplace benefits such as salaries, allowances, and welfare support. The high levels of employee satisfaction further indicate that trade unions are recognised as important institutional partners in advancing employee welfare and promoting constructive labour-management relations.

The study contributes to the limited empirical literature on trade unions within Zambia's public higher education sector by providing institution-specific evidence from LMMU. It demonstrates that effective collaboration between trade unions and university management can enhance employee wellbeing, organisational commitment, and institutional effectiveness. Nevertheless, the study also highlights the need for trade unions to strengthen communication, transparency, and member engagement to ensure that negotiated improvements and workplace benefits are equitably realised across all employee groups. The findings affirm that trade unions remain indispensable stakeholders in promoting employee welfare and supporting sustainable organisational development within public universities.

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