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TRADE UNIONS AND INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY IN ZIMBABWE'S HEALTH SECTOR**Victor Kudakwashe Mapuvire¹, Ricky Munyaradzi Mukonza²**^{1,2} *Staatsartillerie Rd, Philip Nel Park, 0183 Pretoria, South Africa**E-mails:*¹ victormapuvire@gmail.com; ² MukonzaRM@tut.ac.za*Received 25 August 2025; accepted 10 December 2025; published 30 December 2025*

Abstract. Industrial democracy is a critical element in contemporary industrial relations, fostering employee participation and enhancing workplace fairness. However, in Zimbabwe's healthcare sector, industrial democracy appears largely absent, with trade unions struggling to advocate for workers' rights and interests effectively. This study investigates the role of trade unions in promoting industrial democracy within Zimbabwe's health sector between 2010 and 2021. Employing a qualitative research design and case study methodology, this paper examines key challenges that undermine industrial democracy, including inadequate remuneration, non-compliance with Safety, Health, and Environmental Control (SHEC) policies, and significant political interference within trade union operations. Findings reveal that trade unions are often compromised by political interests, limiting their capacity to represent healthcare workers effectively. The study also identifies structural obstacles hindering platforms for employee engagement and rights advocacy. Based on these findings, the paper recommends enhanced government commitment to fair remuneration aligned with living standards, prioritisation of workplace safety, and formal recognition of trade unions as essential agents in fostering industrial democracy in the healthcare sector. These measures are crucial for enhancing employee welfare and promoting democratic practices within Zimbabwe's healthcare industry.

Keywords: Zimbabwe; Industrial Democracy; Health Sector; Trade Unions

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JEL Classifications: I1**1. Introduction**

The concept of industrial democracy has become increasingly important in modern-day industrial relations (Macun, 2025). There has been a growing wave across the globe in which healthcare employees have been feeling that they are not being adequately represented by their respective representatives (Nading, 2021; Danraka, 2021; Spangenberg & Lorek, 2022). Trade unions play a crucial role in maintaining harmonious industrial relations (Makwakwa, 2022; Cleminson, 2024).

The developments in the Industrial Relations (IR) field in Zimbabwe is an unpleasant story to tell (Kasuso, 2021). Since the country was colonised in 1890, as well as the introduction of capitalist enterprise, the country has had a limited form of free and democratic industrial relations system, mostly because the colonial political economy required an oppressive labour relations system. Evidence suggests that, since attaining independence in 1980, the black majority government has maintained the oppressive and unfair labour relations system, which in several ways is either equivalent to or even surpasses the crudity of the system that had been in existence during the colonial period. The desire and agitation among health workers for improved working conditions have remained a concern for management in several parts of the world today (Kasuso, 2021). It should be noted that several organisations within the healthcare sector are plagued by numerous challenges, primarily stemming from inefficient and unproductive management methods or strained relations between trade unions and management.

In Zimbabwe's healthcare sector, over the past few years, the economic situation has continued to significantly deteriorate (Ngepah & Mouteyica, 2024). According to Kasuso (2021), the prevailing economic situation in Zimbabwe means that healthcare employees face increased pressure to perform at their best, despite working conditions being at their worst. This has been an extremely challenging requirement for healthcare workers, such as doctors and nurses. The result of this has been constant strikes, especially by medical doctors and nurses, primarily over salary issues. It has been noted that, since the 2008 economic collapse, strikes by medical workers in Zimbabwe have become a recurring feature. According to reports, in 2008, more than two-thirds of the year was spent on strike by healthcare workers (Chamunogwa & Chakanya, 2021). According to Chikanda (2004), the government of Zimbabwe has been heavy-handed in dealing with the striking doctors and nurses, with their union leaders even sent to prison at times. The government's stance means that healthcare trade unions have been less effective in promoting industrial democracy. Even though the trade unions representing healthcare workers have been playing their role, the scenario has been that, over the past few years, the primary mechanism for strike resolution in the health sector has been the outright prohibition of strikes by the government of Zimbabwe (Kasuso, 2021). It is worth noting that healthcare sector trade unions in Zimbabwe play a crucial role in calling for and mediating strikes or industrial action, largely due to the influence of unions and self-regulatory bodies. Therefore, given this background, this study aims to examine the role played by trade unions in enhancing industrial democracy in Zimbabwe's health sector from 2010 to 2021.

Additionally, there seems to be no existence of industrial democracy in the Zimbabwe healthcare sector. The trade unions representing healthcare workers have failed to effectively fulfil their role in promoting industrial democracy in Zimbabwe's healthcare sector. As a result, Kasuso (2021) states that there have been high vacancy rates in Zimbabwe's health services. Additionally, the healthcare trade unions have failed to advocate for improved compensation for their members, as evidenced by the fact that Zimbabwe's health workers have been going on strike due to poor remuneration and working conditions. For instance, a doctor in Zimbabwe who works in a government setup has been reported to be earning an amount that ranges between US\$100 and 150 per month, whilst a nurse has been reported to be earning an amount that ranges between US\$50 and US\$75 per month (Chamunogwa & Chakanya, 2021). Additionally, healthcare sector trade unions have been infiltrated. They are noted to be taking the side of the government, rather than genuinely representing their members, which has made them a less effective entity for promoting industrial democracy. In most cases, primarily due to political reasons, trade unions have been siding with the government and, compared to standing on the side of their members, have been urging them to return to work rather than taking industrial action.

2. Literature Review

Industrial democracy has been loosely defined as the participation of workers in managerial decisions regarding areas that affect their working lives (Iyiola et al., 2025). Industrial democracy thus focuses on the participatory practices in which employees are notably involved, either through their representatives, such as trade unions, for instance, or as mandated by the legislature, or by having representatives or direct representation. Despite such numerous definitions of industrial democracy, this study defines industrial democracy as it relates to the workplace situation in which the management and employees carry out a number of meetings in which they incorporate the workers' representatives, or with all the workers, and in which there is some form of agreement that is arrived at in terms of issues of concern to the welfare of the workers (Winant, 2021). The key element is the sharing of information and consultations between the employer and employees, with the input of workers being incorporated into the decision-making process.

There are essentially two broad forms of industrial democracy: representative democracy and direct democracy (Blasi & Michie, 2025). Participatory democracy is one in which all workers within the workplace participate, and this cannot be replaced by representative democracy (Winant, 2021). It is worth noting that representative

democracy in the workplace primarily manifests through trade unions and works councils. It should, however, be noted that with both forms of democracy (direct democracy and representative democracy), it is the employees who assume control over the decisions that affect them at the workplace (Blasi & Michie, 2025).

According to Winant (2021), representative democracy occurs when the majority of workers are restricted to voting for individuals who will represent their interests in issues that affect all employees, such as the making of laws that govern them at work. However, direct democracy tends to grant all workers the right to participate directly in making the laws they are required to abide by, which also affect them (ibid). With direct democracy, there is thus a scenario in which every employee is involved in the decision-making process, which affects them, and such a function cannot be delegated to other employees (Roessler & Schmitt, 2021). In any case, the most vital aspect is that the individuals who are affected by decisions are the ones responsible for making them and must thus choose the structures with which they are comfortable and be accountable to them as well.

According to Miller (2009), the proper functioning of any democratic system is contingent upon particular key principles which people must abide by at all times, and these may include shared values. Some of these democratic values include equality, participation, support and dignity of all contributions (Winant, 2021). Therefore, with industrial democracy, the notion of individualism is ignored, and industrial democracy thus places some level of emphasis on the fact that those individuals' power should always be accountable to the majority and are required to perform their duties to meet the desires of their subordinates. For instance, the requirements for free speech and the right to self-expression must be protected at all times, particularly through union-organised secret ballots (Johnson & Howsam, 2018). There is thus a need for structures that effectively maximise cooperation as well as consultations, and also structures that effectively encourage individual participation (Roessler & Schmitt, 2021). Similarly, employees need to be fully engaged to ensure their rights are satisfied, which requires them to know the organisation's situations, plans, and challenges (Greer et al., 2017). A sense of equality among employees must also exist, along with recognition of each other's contributions and opportunities to be creative and free from unnecessary pressures (Berest et al., 2021).

Therefore, for workplace democracy to thrive, the basic as well as pressing wishes and aspirations of individuals within a particular setup must be upheld and respected.

Several aspects of industrial democracy have been identified in the literature. According to Winant (2021), these aspects include worker representation, joint councils, joint committees, gender representation and educational training. Roessler and Schmitt (2021) further add that such structures must be designed in a manner that effectively and sustainably addresses the existing challenges. Therefore, an organisation that is regarded as democratic must insist on broad knowledge sharing regarding issues such as the organisation's vision (Greer et al., 2017). The effectiveness of workers is contingent upon the extent of communication within the organisation as well as the manner in which the employees are informed and trained. Consequently, there is a need for group processes in terms of major decision-making and conflict resolution (Winant, 2021). In that respect, it has been noted that industrial democracy can be effectively enhanced through works councils, shop floor programs, direct employee participation, representation through trade unions, worker consultation by the human resources department and a legislative framework (Roessler & Schmitt, 2021). Trade unions are therefore important elements that should not be ignored and should participate in the organisation's decision-making process.

Trade unions are created and elected by workers to represent their interests in negotiations or discussions with management. The trade unions are thus entirely comprised of employees and do not include representatives from management. Trade unions are therefore a political and economic entities within a single workplace or sector, such as a company or industry. They are collectively controlled by the workers of that workplace/sector through core principles (Madzime, 2016). Trade unions are a system that contains temporary as well as revocable delegates, where workers have the power to decide on their needs and select delegates from among their own

ranks. Trade unions comprise employees who their peers choose to represent the rest of the workforce in discussions or negotiations with their employer. It should be noted that the number of members within a single trade union is determined by the size of the workers that are to be represented.

There are several functions that trade unions carry out, and in Zimbabwe, for instance, these are outlined in the Labour Act of Zimbabwe, as well as other statutes of law. Trade unions exist for the purposes of representing employees concerned in any matter which affects their rights and interests, such as poor remuneration, poor working conditions, long working hours, poor sanitation at the workplace, as well as the failure by the management to deliver on promises that would have been previously made to employees. Trade unions also have the responsibility of negotiating with employers regarding the collective bargaining agreement, including the terms and conditions of employment (Labour Act, 2006). In the most extreme of cases, it is the trade unions' task to recommend job action to the employees that they represent (Winant, 2021).

Additionally, trade unions serve as a direct link and a communication medium between management and employees at the shop floor level (Roessler & Schmitt, 2021). Trade unions also serve as a means for presenting and discussing grievances, expectations, and requirements with management. Workers, therefore, exist to promote stability, as well as good employee-management relations, and to encourage the settlement of disputes through conciliatory methods. They are also required in instances where applicable to ensure that the industrial agreement or the industrial regulations for the industry are being observed in a mutually beneficial manner for both the employees and management (Hemerijc, 2025). Trade unions also exist to promote productivity by creating a stable and positive atmosphere within the working environment. They must therefore ensure that, if any employee seeks the advice of the representatives regarding a grievance or disciplinary matter, at least one member of the committee is available to offer the required advice and assistance.

3. Research Methodology

The study made use of a qualitative approach with a case study strategy to analyse the role of trade unions in enhancing industrial democracy in Zimbabwe's health sector 2010-2021. This paper utilised documentary search as a secondary data source. Secondary research involves the collation and/or synthesis of existing research. The advantage of using this instrument is that the data is readily available. The researcher gathered data from a documentary search, which includes both published and unpublished works.

4. Findings

4.1 The role played by trade unions in enhancing industrial democracy in the health sector

Within the modern-day workplace, the need to consider employee input in operations has been recognised, and this consideration has become an essential element for the success of organisations. There has therefore arisen a need for organisations to involve employees in their negotiations, deliberations, and other important decisions regarding workplace issues, particularly those that affect their work and welfare. Such a scenario can be attributed to the economic conditions, as well as the highly volatile business environments that tend to change constantly. Syed (2023) noted that employee involvement significantly enhances their engagement, motivating them to perform at their best and ultimately improving the organisation's overall performance. Therefore, when all employees within an organisation function at their best and maximum capacity, there tends to be an improvement in the organisation's performance, and this in turn makes a significant contribution to the organisation's overall performance. From this viewpoint, industrial democracy empowers employees with autonomy in decision-making regarding matters that have a direct impact on their work, while also enabling them to have control over their work.

The fact that the prevailing operating environment is volatile and is characterised by endless changes means that for organisations to remain competitive, there is a need to place increased emphasis on the management of employees with regard to their participation within an organisation's decision making, sharing responsibility as well as authority with them within the workplace. Labour-management cooperation is a crucial element towards an organisation's success. Therefore, if organisations can attract, retain, develop and engage with their employees, they can attain some level of sustainable competitive advantage. Such a view is strongly supported by Başar (2024), who asserts that an engaged workforce not only enhances an organisation's competitive advantage but also fosters a positive environment in which employees can contribute meaningful value through innovative ideas and improved business practices. Emotional employee engagement in the workplace often stems from their participation in matters related to the workplace, either individually or through representative platforms, such as works councils. Such viewpoints notably support the need for organisations to promote industrial democracy within the health sector. For instance, there is a requirement within the current Zimbabwean economy for employees to perform at their level best to achieve maximum value and make a meaningful contribution to the health sector.

In addition, workers may be willing to work overtime and add extra hours to their work to achieve their objectives. They may also be willing to devise new and improved methods of carrying out their work for the benefit of the organisation. Similarly, other positive attributes of employee engagement involve higher productivity levels, job satisfaction, motivation, commitment, low attrition rates, increased passion and commitment to the organisation, a high-energy working environment, a greater sense of team, higher levels of customer satisfaction, and reduced absenteeism (Makumbe, 2016). Therefore, the successful participation of workers in negotiations as well as deliberations regarding workplace issues ensures that workers become more engaged, productive, and committed to the organisation compared to disengaged employees (Makumbe, 2016). Workers who operate in an undemocratic environment tend to be disengaged from their work and lose motivation, ultimately performing at their best. This has a significantly negative impact on organisational performance. When workers are excluded from issues about their welfare, they are likely to become resentful towards both their managers and their work (Makumbe, 2016). They will thus be less likely to have a positive response to their managers and or show an increased level of performance for the success of the organisation. Therefore, industrial democracy must be embraced within the health sector to ensure that there is the creation of value by employees working in collaboration and in harmony with management, because the best level of performance cannot be realised in chaos, in which there is an antagonistic relationship between management and labour, but instead where the parties co-exist harmoniously.

4.2 The impact of the role played by trade unions in enhancing industrial democracy in the health sector

The role played by trade unions has a significant impact, resulting in numerous benefits. Certain benefits can be attained through the existence of trade unions. For instance, the presence of shop-floor representation has been associated with an improved work environment (Madzime, 2016). The voice of employees often fosters a constructive and open relationship environment, which in turn results in a scenario where there is improved commitment, motivation, and teamwork, ultimately leading to increased productivity and a greater competitive advantage. Additionally, it promotes a sense of involvement of employees by management.

Industrial democracy within the health sector means that the contributions and wishes of employees are often represented during meetings. This, in turn, means that the attitudes and behaviours of such employees are improved. The result is that employees become better able to make a positive contribution towards the achievement of the organisation's objectives (Greer et al., 2017). Moreover, as a result of employees' involvement, they also become more willing to challenge issues and become more prepared for potential changes, which is a notably positive attribute for the organisation (Madzime, 2016). Effective worker representation also results in improvements in the organisation's performance. Good employer–employee relations thus result in a harmonious

working environment that leads to decreased levels of absenteeism, improved productivity, and a better level of health worker retention.

Trade unions are regarded as a form of democracy in themselves, owing to the characteristics they possess, which support industrial democracy. These characteristics include involvement and joint decision-making (Makumbe, 2016). An ideal democracy is a prerequisite for meeting the five criteria, and trade unions have the capacity to fulfil these criteria. This criterion encompasses effective participation, which includes parties possessing equal opportunities to advance their preferences and question the decisions of others, while justifying their own.

The idea that trade unions involve employer and employee representatives in deliberations meets the effective participation criteria that is entrenched in industrial democracy (Madzime, 2016). Another criterion for an ideal democracy is voting equality at the decisive stage, such as in trade unions. It has been noted that, in everyday practice, when voting on decisions, employer and employee representatives have assurances that their judgments will be regarded as valid and are further accorded an equal opportunity to participate in the voting process (Greer et al., 2017). Such equality to vote for both sides on matters of mutual interest seemingly makes trade unions an effective unit when it comes to promoting industrial democracy, as industrial democracy encompasses the participation of all individuals who are affected by decisions in the decision-making process.

Another essential element is enlightened understanding, which is well-reflected in trade unions, where all parties are given equal opportunities to decide what best serves their interests without undue interference from others (Syed, 2023). In addition, an ideal setup for industrial democracy is one where workers have control of the agenda, and this is notably evident in trade unions, where both employee and employer parties are allowed to make decisions regarding the issues that must be discussed (Makumbe, 2016). Additionally, industrial democracy is inclusive, with the workers having a legitimate stake in the entire process. Trade unions have been observed to promote inclusiveness. This is because, before any workplace decisions are made, employers take the necessary and requisite steps to include employees in deliberations, decision-making, and the final implementation of proposed decisions (Madzime, 2016). (Makumbe, 2016) However, it argues that the ideal of a democracy is a utopian objective, and trade unions are not always effective in promoting industrial democracy.

All the same, trade unions have the capacity to make meaningful contributions towards the organisation through the creation of a culture of cooperation between management and labour at the workplace (Madzime, 2016). Grillos (2021) thus assert that increased consultation allows for efficient decision-making, as parties contribute equally and engage in deliberations regarding the decisions that need to be made. Armstrong (2014) asserts that the best decisions are those that can be arrived at through consultation and continuous interaction between management and employees.

In addition, trade unions serve as an effective communication channel between management and workers, where both parties play a role in speaking as well as listening to one another before attempting to reach a mutually agreed-upon decision (Makumbe, 2016). This evidently serves as an indication that trade unions are actually an effective platform for consultation, which leads to industrial democracies capable of advancing organisational interests. Therefore, in their quest to promote industrial democracy, trade unions result in improvements, as well as joint decision-making, that, in turn, lead to quantitatively improved workplace decisions. The reason is that the decisions are made in the best interest of both parties, with conflict having been resolved.

Moreover, trade unions reduce the information gap between employers and employees by encouraging the smooth transition in times of organisational transformation, which leads to an increase in faith and trust between the parties. Such a viewpoint is supported by the perception that organisations tend to be increasingly vulnerable to change, which may lead to new ways of conducting business, as well as the need to ensure quality for customers (Greer et al., 2017). Therefore, uninterrupted information exchange between management and workers means that

the organisations become continuously ready for change and can thus easily adapt to the constantly evolving environment. Johnson & Howsman (2018) state that a climate of industrial democracy, supported by strong trade unions, provides significant economic benefits for the organisation.

In their strongest form, trade unions tend to enjoy unified decision-making rights on certain key matters related to work processes. Machado & Silva (2019) are of the view that, within the broader context, trade unions play a role in assisting to diffuse industrial relations conflicts and thereby promoting a peaceful work environment. This is because, at times, workers and management representatives are unable to reach an agreement on specific critical issues, and such a scenario can be remedied through an internal special committee comprising representatives from both the employer and the employees. It should thus be noted that industrial democracy can only thrive where parties share a similar perspective and, in the absence of conflict, which disrupts the relationship.

If embraced for the purpose of promoting industrial democracy, trade unions also play a significant role in reducing stress and enhancing the well-being of employees, as they have a greater say in the overall organisation of work (Makumbe, 2016). Employees are therefore empowered through industrial democracy, particularly about matters that directly affect their work, enabling them to exercise control over their work. The involvement of employees thus enhances their engagement in work, motivating them to perform at their best and improving overall organisational performance. It is widely acknowledged that when all workers within an organisation perform at their best, they can significantly enhance the organisation's productivity.

4.3 Challenges faced by trade unions in enhancing industrial democracy in the health sector

There are several challenges that trade unions encounter within the health sector. A review of the literature reveals that trade unions lack significant legislative backing, which hinders their ability to challenge management. For instance, their meetings must be conducted outside working hours, and their decisions are not binding on management (Madzime, 2016).

Additionally, in most instances, employees are allowed to participate in the decision-making process regarding issues related to worker welfare; however, management holds the power to either make the decision binding or not (Makumbe, 2016). Another challenge faced by trade unions is the involvement of the state/ government in labour matters. The state/government notably affects the effectiveness of trade unions and their activities in aspects such as legislated minimum wages or salary caps. Such a scenario partially contributes to the effective representation of workers, and these parameters tend to limit participation, thereby restricting industrial democracy.

Another challenge arises from the fact that workers tend to choose their preferred representatives, which means that in some instances, the chosen representatives may not be adequately qualified or up to the task (Greer et al., 2017). For example, the most skilled and better-educated shop-floor employees tend to be promoted to supervisory positions and therefore become ineligible to represent their fellow workers as per guidelines set out in the Labour Relations Act.

Trade unions face several challenges, including the untimely implementation of resolutions or agreements. Makumbe (2016) states that such a scenario originates from the fact that employers provide the funding for the majority of the resources required for successfully implementing the agreements. Therefore, when they do not totally agree with them, they tend to delay implementing such agreements (Safaei, 2015). Such a scenario results in tension within the workplace and further leads to employee representatives losing trust in the forum as a representative democracy.

Therefore, the prevailing scenario is one in which US employers, in the majority of cases, largely determine the outcome of agreements agreed upon in trade union organs (Safaei, 2015). It has also been noted that management

tends to accept contributions from employee representatives only as a courtesy for their presence in the trade unions (Machado & Silva, 2019). The organisations have been noted to have predetermined decisions before the holding of, for instance, works councils. They have control over all deliberations, as well as the agenda, and matters they deem unnecessary can be removed from the agenda to be deliberated (Safaei, 2015). Even though such perceptions have been argued against for a long time, the existing scenario is one in which management still maintains an iron grip over the things that must be in organisations (Greer et al., 2017). Such a scenario is the direct opposite of the concept of industrial democracy, which encompasses total involvement and inclusiveness of employees in the decision-making process, overlapping with the implementation of agreements.

One other challenge which is experienced by trade unions in their bid to promote industrial democracy is that management tends to consider them and similar voice mechanisms to be a channel of communication, operating in either a top-down or occasionally a bottom-up direction, as compared to being a more complex and less linear arrangement involving employees in active discussion (Makumbe, 2016). Such a viewpoint is supported by Kadungure (2015), who notes that communication to and from both sides is regarded as providing the employees with more power above the consultative part that is played by trade unions, in instances where their arguments are in support of a transition which is regarded as unfavourable by the employer. In such cases, management representatives have the authority to override the wishes expressed by the trade unions, even without providing a complete or satisfactory explanation (Makumbe, 2016). Hence, the lack of understanding on the part of management regarding what effective consultation encompasses hinders the effectiveness and success of trade unions in their quest to promote industrial democracy.

It has been observed that the quality of worker representatives has an impact on worker participation. Greer et al. (2017) suggest that in several organisations, employees have been observed to select members who are vocal and outspoken but lack a thorough understanding of labour laws or those without representational experience. The result of this is challenges in that the chosen members will mostly be dominated by management representatives who have an increased level of skills (Safaei, 2015). Kadungure (2015) thus notes that, in the modern-day era, workers are still ignorant in terms of choosing their representatives, and these may lack relevant knowledge and information regarding the concepts that may need to be discussed, as well as the laws which bind the process and are therefore unable to match their management counterparts. As a result, the worker representatives end up agreeing with the majority of the proposals that would have been presented by management, meaning that decisions would have essentially been made by management.

Additionally, the limited knowledge which worker representatives may possess has a negative effect on their ability to negotiate with management representatives. Kadungure (2015) states that the argument often presented is that trade unions may not be able to interpret technical documents, such as the Labour Act itself, and may at times fail to understand the main economic terminologies used by management. This undermines the entire process of representative democracy, as employee representatives' participation in decision-making is limited to areas where they are fully aware that management controls the process. The employee representatives' limited knowledge about the topics being discussed hinders their ability to play a meaningful role. Another challenge observed in the literature is that trade unions often disagree with management (Machado & Silva, 2019). There are several instances where trade unions deliberately choose to stifle management initiatives, even if these are reasonable (Safaei, 2015). In other cases, trade union meetings have been transformed into battlegrounds, where workers have taken aim and rejected management's proposals (Greer et al., 2019). Such behaviour has been noted to affect the success of trade unions in their quest to promote as well as sustain industrial democracy, because trade union members wish to be perceived as doing something which their counterparts at the workplace and thus, they take part in different forms of tactics, to stifle the ideas introduced by management even in instances where they make good business sense (Makumbe, 2016).

Conclusions and recommendations

This study's findings showed that the government has not been offering remuneration that is adequate for the prevailing living standards. Remuneration issues have been a key issue behind industrial action by healthcare workers. The current level of remuneration for doctors in the healthcare sector was significantly higher than what was required to maintain prevailing living standards. One of the most visible issues was the poor remuneration packages being offered to health sector employees in Zimbabwe. Their unions have thus further failed to improve these remuneration packages. It was also noted that employees felt the employer did not highly regard issues related to their safety.

Additionally, employees have not been allowed to express their views on safety issues. There have been no efforts made towards addressing employee concerns regarding safety issues in terms of SHEC policies. In terms of the SHEC policies, several issues of concern arose, including the lack of prioritisation of SHEC issues, funding challenges, and the Government of Zimbabwe, as the major employer of the country's health workforce, turning a deaf ear and a blind eye to the plight of its health workforce. In terms of the platforms established to advance the interests and rights of employees, these platforms have not been effective. As a result, employees indeed face challenges in asserting their interests and rights. The paper further revealed that trade unions indeed faced challenges in enhancing industrial democracy in Zimbabwe's health sector, and these challenges have had a negative impact. Some of the most notable challenges that the respondents noted included political interference, unfair labour laws, unfair labour practices, lack of sincerity on the part of the employer, infiltration of some of the senior membership in such organisations and lack of adequate funding to carry out the mandate of representing and advocating for the interests and rights of healthcare workers.

Based on the above conclusions, the paper recommends that the government improve the access and functioning of the platforms put in place to advance their interests and rights. The platforms that were in place for employees to advance their interests and rights were no longer effective in Zimbabwe due to factors such as political interference in trade union operations. This means that the platforms used by healthcare workers in advancing their interests and rights are ineffective.

Additionally, the government of Zimbabwe should ensure that the healthcare workers are adequately remunerated. The Trade Unions should thus engage the government and actively lobby for fair compensation that is in line with the prevailing living standards. Negotiations for improving the remuneration of healthcare workers should be conducted in good faith.

There is a need for safety issues to be prioritised by the employers and responsible authorities within the healthcare sector. Additionally, healthcare sector authorities should consider entering into Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) as a way to address and compensate for missing resources that are essential in ensuring the safety of their employees aligns with SHEC policies. Additionally, the respective trade unions should actively lobby for safety issues to receive more attention and prioritisation. Therefore, a proactive policy or strategy is needed to address safety issues.

Trade unions must be recognised as essential players in the promotion of workplace democracy. As a result, their suggestions and proposals should be considered objectively by the responsible authorities. To that end, the responsible authorities must ensure the creation of an enabling environment that is suitable for ensuring the representation activities of trade unions can thrive.

Challenges such as chronic underfunding combined with the social, economic as well as political challenges which were being experienced within Zimbabwe's public health system mean that there is need for the government to come up with find the political will required for meeting the commitments which were made

under the Abuja Declaration, that is setting aside at least fifteen percent (15%) of the national budget towards funding the health sector.

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