

GLOBALISATION AND ITS IMPACT ON LABOUR RELATIONS IN ZIMBABWE

¹Cleopas Fore,² Wilfred I. Ukpere

¹Department of Industrial Psychology and People Management, College of Business & Economics, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

Email:cleopasfore@gmail.com

wiukpere@uj.ac.za

Abstract

Globalisation created some form of standardised global labour market epitomised by flexible labour legislation and friendly employment policies and these developments have affected labour relations globally. USAID (2014) notes that Zimbabwe needed to embrace globalisation as a solution to its troubled economic and labour market challenges advising that globalisation is unavoidable, and resisting it through unfriendly labour laws and internal policies would only lead to firms moving their business to other countries with better policies. The Zimbabwean labour relations environment is characterised by liberalised employment laws that provides for employee democracy, industry and workplace level labour relations councils namely national employment councils and works councils respectively. In spite of this, both employers and employees are unhappy with the current labour relations environment. The objective of this article is to understand the impact of globalisation on labour relations in Zimbabwe. It therefore adopted a qualitative research paradigm. A purposive sample of fourteen participants took part in the study wherein twelve participated in interviews and two wrote memoirs detailing their experiences. Findings showed that globalisation has impact on labour legislation. The nature of Zimbabwe's labour relations showed two composites namely of employee participation and inherent antagonism between employers and employees. The article recommended that to ameliorate the negative impact of globalisation on labour relations in Zimbabwe, employees and their employers require to work together in establishing a desired labour relations culture. An integrated labour relations theoretical framework is proposed as a holistic model that can help employers and employees to understand globalisation and labour relations in its totality from internal and external factors of national and global magnitude. If globalisation is understood from its broad perspective, it will be easy to deal with the challenges it occasion.

Keywords: Globalisation, labour relations, employer, employees, unions, state

1. Introduction and Background

The increasing influence of transnational companies, and the call by the World Trade Organisation for standardised labour markets and open global competition have made labour relations increasingly globally standardised. In fact, "*globalisation has set new parameters and there is tendency towards creation of a global labour market* (Munck, 2002, p.11). Blainpain (2006) supports this view, arguing that global market economy has a significant impact on the way in which the labour market functions on an international, regional and national level. MacDonald (1997) points out that in labour relations the actions of government, business and labour are influenced by several factors of international magnitude.

The role of the state in labour relations is to ensure industrial tranquillity necessary for economic growth and societal wellness through regulating workplace relations, mediating between business and labour, and, in some cases, intervening and influencing power dynamics. However, Blainpain (2006) argues that, in a global capitalist economy, the state's actions are under constant scrutiny from international boards like the ILO, the World Trade Organisation, and international monetary institutions to ensure that member states adhere to global standards in the world of work and business. The Zimbabwean Government's intervention in labour relations has been cautious owing to close monitoring by the international community Tarugarira (2014). During the global capitalist evolution in Zimbabwe, the state disintegrated the labour market into fragmented undertakings, and

created industry-specific unions (Gwisai, 2006). The state oversaw massive deregulation and amendments in line with global capitalists' recommendations to liberalise the labour market.

Harcourt and Wood (2004) note that globalisation is both a connecting and a disconnecting process. In the case of Zimbabwe, the State through; (1) neo-liberalism opened up new opportunities for organised labour by supporting workplace democracy; and (2) labour deregulation weakened the role and power of unions. Worker victimisation increased and government became less receptive to increased organised labour. Whilst globalisation pessimists might have perceived globalisation as being pathogenic and a catalyst for worker marginalisation, the World Bank (2018) viewed it differently. It noted that embracing globalisation is the only solution for addressing economic and labour market challenges, which Zimbabwe faces. Globalisation is unavoidable, and resisting it through unfriendly labour laws and internal policies leads to firms moving their business to other countries that offer better policies and ease of doing business (USAID, 2014). Hence, with this background, it is increasingly necessary to understand the current labour relations climate in Zimbabwe to promote economic growth and at the same time ensure tranquillity in labour relations.

1.1 Problem statement, research questions and objectives

Labour relations have become highly complicated, as the force of globalisation continues to pressurise workplaces through technological evolutions and ever-changing ways of doing business. Zimbabwean labour relations has lagged behind international changes, as all major past labour law reforms have not addressed major changes in the world of workplace relations. In fact, employers and employees alike are not pleased with the nature of the country's labour relations. Workers feel unsafe, whilst employers perceive national policies and employment regulations to be divorced from the challenges that globalisation cause. As the regulator, government faces increasing pressure from both workers and employers to find a solution to the globalisation puzzle. It is therefore pertinent to probe this phenomenon from the view-point of the actors (employers and employees) in order to understand the current labour relations culture and inspire improvement for the benefit of the parties.

1.2. Research question

The above problem statement triggered the research question below:

- What is the impact of globalisation on labour relations in Zimbabwe?

1.3. Research objective

The objective of this article is:

- To understand the impact of globalisation and on labour relations in Zimbabwe.

2. Literature review

2.1. Globalisation and labour relations in Zimbabwe

Extant literature describes labour relations as the general interaction between the employer and employees in any work environment, which is governed by a set of rules and policies at company, national and global level (Burchill, 2014). Bendix (2007) argues that the relationship at work is influenced by both global and national factors that are critical to determine the national economy and societal concepts, rendering the state highly interested in labour relations issues. In as much as the state is interested in the influence of globalisation and labour relations at societal and national level, employers are also interested in the impact of labour relations on their business operations, while the same can be said of unions who place the interest of employees first (Blanpain, 2006). Given these divergent interests, the ILO has a mandate to deal with global social challenges raised by the social partners (**state, employer and employees**), and it sets and oversees the implementation of international labour standards

2.1.2. Advent of globalisation and the role of the state in labour relations

The general responsibilities of the state include setting national policies and laws that govern a nation's industrial relations. Bendix (2007) asserts that the state's priority in this function is to ensure a balance to the contrasting needs of employers and employees. McDonald (1997) recognises the

influence of globalisation on the state as it executes its regulation powers. In fact, the dawn of globalisation sealed the success of capitalism over communism, even in predominately communist countries. Modern social and political systems now support international investment and capitalism. There is no doubt that in deciding FDI disbursement, transnational companies look for skilled competent workers, flexible labour legislation, and appropriate government security for their investment (Munck, 2002). These prerequisites subsequently influence the nature of national policies and labour legislations that each nation will adopt to attract FDI.

Soon after independence in 1980, Zimbabwe did not immediately receive Foreign Direct Investment, as the new government had socialistic ideologies and was viewed to be anti-capitalist (Saunders, 2007). Zimbabwe experienced hostile diplomatic relations with South Africa under apartheid, whilst Britain and the United States adopted the principle of non-alignment, accusing Zimbabwe of being a socialist and communist country (Tarugarira, 2014). It placed pressure on the fragile Zimbabwean economy, inherited from the Rhodesian government that was under sanctions, and fresh from a protracted liberation bush war.

Realising these economic challenges, and that the international community was waiting to see the political and economic direction that the new government administration would take, the Robert Mugabe led government adopted the Zimbabwean Conference on Reconstruction and Development (ZIMCORD) in 1981, and aligned itself with the West, dropping the socialist ideology (Sachikonye, 1990). It called for co-operation and reconciliation with the white minority in government, business, farms and all spheres of the economy. In this respect, Tarugarira (2014, p. 8) notes: *“Mugabe’s government placed itself firmly in the West camp...further strengthening the close global ties between Zimbabwe and the West.”*

The Zimbabwean government therefore adopted notable labour relations policies as it liberalised the labour market some of which are discussed below.

2.1.2.1. Creation of workplace based codes of conduct

A workplace codes of conduct is a set of regulations agreed upon by the employer and the worker’s committee, designed according to the peculiarity of the work organisation, and are binding on the employer and its employees (Sambureni, 2001, see also Gwisai, 2006). Bearing this in mind, Mucheche (2017) explains that agreements between the employer and worker’s committee are always tilted in favour of employers, since the employer wields superior power. Since codes of conduct enunciate the behaviour required of employees at work, conditions of service and disciplinary and grievance handling procedures, majority if not all favour employers. For example, in disciplinary cases, the employer always chairs the meetings, and in the event of a deadlock, the chairperson has a casting vote (Bhebhe & Muhapa, 2014). Madhuku (2015) argues that the state took a cautious approach towards its interventions in labour relations, and the creation of workplace-based codes of conduct to regulate labour relations in Zimbabwe was a way to ensure labour market flexibility in line with guidelines from international monetary institutions.

2.1.2.2. Free labour market and national employment councils

As the global capitalist revolution engulfed Zimbabwe, the state disintegrated the labour market into fragmented undertakings called National Employment Councils, which were mandated to govern labour relations for a specific industry; for example, the transport industry, cotton industry, tobacco industry, beverages industry, and the food and catering industry, to mention a few. By so doing, the state created free labour markets what Munck (2002) termed self-regulating markets in which government ended up losing control of labour market trends.

This development created industry specific unions, which weakened the position of the union (Gwisai, 2006). Each industry created its own conditions of service and disciplinary procedures, according to the peculiarity of its business operations, and more often than not, conditions were unfavourable for employees (Sambureni, 2001). Zimbabwe’s labour relations situation can be equated with Polanyi’s (1957, p. 33) trajectory, noting that the *“industrial revolution in the 18th Century caused catastrophic dislocation of lives of common people.”* Similarly, in Zimbabwe, global capitalism has had deleterious

effects on the proletariats, as jobs became highly insecure and labour became a commodity that can be purchased or thrown away, if no longer needed, while living and working conditions became deplorable (Nherera, 2010).

2.1.2.3. Special economic zones in Zimbabwe

Another interesting concept that generally influences the nations' perspective of labour market regulations was the need to ensure national competitiveness (Held, 1999). Nations intervene in labour relations to protect employers and to ensure that economic operations in terms of the cost of wages, among other costs, are minimised in order to increase product competitiveness in the contest of international markets and exports. According to the Global Investment Centre (2015), Zimbabwe created Export Processing Zones (EPZs) in 1995, which are now called Special Economic Zones (SEZ). The EPZs gave special treatment to employers participating in export businesses in order to promote ease of doing business, with specific exemptions from stringent labour regulations (Kanyenze, 2011). The Export Processing Zones Act provided for less favourable conditions of service for employees, which were different from those prescribed in the Labour Act (Global Investment Center, 2015).

According to Jauch (2003), the inception of EPZs in Zimbabwe led to suspension of the Labour Act [Chapter 28:01] for all companies under EPZs as an incentive to investors. The rationale was to ensure cheap labour to improve export competitiveness, thus exempting companies under EPZs from collective bargaining and tripartite relations. The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions challenged the exclusion of employees under EPZs, citing poor working conditions and violation of labour rights to organise and engage in collective bargaining, as provided for by the ILO (Milberg & Amengual, 2008). The ILO admitted that labour relations under EPZs were controversial and difficult to correct. For example, in Pakistan, the ILO was advised by the government not to interfere with poor working conditions in EPZs, since it had allowed transnational companies to set the said conditions as a way of study and promoting investment (Jauch, 2003).

2.1.2.4. Introduction of price controls

As it became apparent that the government was failing to cope with the globalisation run-away train, new internal policies of localisation were adopted (Dansereau & Zamponi, 2005). From 2005 to 2008, the government instituted price controls on basic commodities to try and protect the proletariats that complained about the ever-changing prices of basic commodities whilst wage increases remained marginal (Global Investment Center, 2015). Business lamented that the institutionalisation of price controls was not in line with production or import costs, causing losses on their operations. Companies stopped production, whilst others halted imports and closed their industries and retail operations, resulting in a shortage of basic commodities evidenced by empty supermarket shelves (Tarugarira, 2014). Some transnational companies shut down their operations in Zimbabwe, and relocated to other countries (Majaya, 2018). There was no longer collaboration from government, business and labour in dealing with the labour market.

2.1.3. Effects of state policies in deepening globalisation

Without a combined effort from government, business, and the international community to stabilise the economic situation, trade and industry decadence became imminent, rendering the crumbling of harmonious labour relations unavoidable. Employment relations crushed to its lowest levels, some companies closed, employees lost their jobs, some worked for no pay as employers failed to meet their obligation to pay, and for those who could pay, inflation eroded salaries to an extent where a single monthly wage could not buy a loaf of bread on the following day (Dzimbiri, 2008). Indeed, this situation resonates with Giddens' (1990, p. 507) conceptualisation of globalisation, which the author says "*created a world of losers, a few on the fast track to prosperity and the majority condemned to a life of misery and despair*".

These developments relate to Ukpere and Slabbert's (2009, p. 39) comments on globalisation and unemployment:

"Growing unemployment and underemployment, which have been witnessed around the globe, can be attributed to global logic of competitive profit-making management techniques of outsourcing and corporate migrations, downsizing, atomisation and widespread automation" (Ukpere & Slabbert, 2009, p. 39).

The authors argue that globalisation aggravates unemployment, leading to inequality and poverty. With reference to Zimbabwe, Nherera (2010) notes that whilst globalisation created opportunities, it mainly benefited the globalisers who enjoyed liberalised markets, but caused increased poverty for general workers, especially in developing countries. The author claims that globalisation had a negative impact on Zimbabwe, as it heralded retrenchments, and caused declines in living standards. Unions found themselves in a precariously helpless situation.

2.1.3. Globalisation and the role of unions in labour relations

Throughout the history of Zimbabwe's labour relations, unions have been extensively involved in both contributing to labour law formulation, and in working as a critique of government policies (Harcourt & Wood, 2004). A number of scholars generally agree that whilst unions concentrated much of their efforts on criticising government policies, they failed to appreciate the impact and power of globalisation over states, and that the primary cause of union problems were owed to increased international competition and global changes in the labour market, and not to national factors (Whiteley, 2004). Globalisation is viewed to be responsible for labour market problems such as poor working conditions, unemployment, inequality, and increased poverty (Salamon, 2000). Ukpere and Slabbert (2009) mention that most research studies generally indicate the existence of positive correlation between globalisation and unemployment.

Due to the host of these labour market challenges, and with deepening globalisation, trade unionism has become highly complicated. Salamon (2000) defines trade unionism as the organisation of workers into a collective unity for purposes of advocating for employee welfare, rights and representation on wages negotiations, as well as conditions of service. In 1992 government adopted ESAP and the labour law reviews of 1992, which increased union participation in National Employment Councils (NECs), but technically took away unions' direct influence on the workplace (Raftopoulos, 1995). Direct workplace issues were now handled by the worker's committees in the newly formed works councils (Gwisai, 2006). The ZCTU was broken into small unco-ordinated industry-specific unions, dotted across the labour market. The coming of industry-specific collective bargaining councils (NECs) changed the unions' militant nature, as they adopted a new approach of co-operation with employers to ensure continued organisational survival in their respective specific industries (Whiteley, 2004).

Furthermore, worker's committees that began to participate in wage negotiations and conditions of service at workplace level in the works council started to question the importance of trade unions (Gwisai, 2006). Employees' monetary subscriptions to the unions became meaningless, as union representation became invisible, leading to many employees leaving the union membership (Madhuku, 2015). Mkandawire (1996) observes that globalisation introduced pervasive restructuring of workplaces to align production and operations with international trends in order for organisations to be globally competitive, which resulted in declining union membership, as employees co-operated increasingly with their employers. Kelly (2015) maintains that the decline of union influence in labour relations proved to be a common fate as global capitalism and neo-liberalism advanced.

2.1.4. Radical unionism, the struggle for survival and the aftermath

Munck (2002) maintains that global labour force and unionism has not only occurred because capital became mobile in the 1980s, but rather that it is the proliferation of proletariat's discontent against both capitalism and state repression. In the case of Zimbabwe, the ZCTU openly challenged government policies through nation-wide labour riots and job stay-aways, while the government

descended heavily on the unions to thwart industrial action, and arrest union leaders (Sutcliffe, 2013). The labour movement soon degenerated into a political movement, and the ZCTU leaders formed a political party called the Movement of Democratic Change (MDC), with support from Britain and the United States (Kanyenze, 2011).

Saunders (2007) states that in order to weaken the power of the ZCTU, the government created a ZANU-PF aligned trade union, namedly the Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions (ZFTU), headed by Alfred Makwarimba as Secretary General, and Joseph Chinotimba as President. The ZFTU targeted mainly white-owned and transnational companies, with the aim of reforming workplace conditions of service, thereby attracting considerable membership from the remnant of employees who survived massive job losses owing to retrenchments, liquidation, and relocation of companies (Campagnon, 2011).

Consequently, membership was split between the ZCTU and the ZFTU. This further weakened the union's power in labour relations (Kanyenze, 2011). Trade unions in Zimbabwe were and are still pre-occupied with in-house fighting and rivalry between the two mother-boards at the expense of workplace democracy and employee representation. This development cascaded into specific industries, where industry-based unions split with one group aligned to the ZCTU, and the other to the ZFTU, along different political affiliations, with resounding negative effects on employee representation and, subsequently, on industrial harmony (Yeros, 2013).

2.3. Employers as proponents of globalisation

The employer or owner of the business usually has managers operating his/her organisation. Myers (1959), as cited by (Bendix, 2007), defines these managers as employees to whom the employer delegates responsibilities to manage the business on his/her behalf. The duties of managers in labour relations include decision-making, policy formulation, making rules, managing employees, and directing tasks and operations. With the advent of globalisation, the role of senior managers has become complicated, as they are called upon to execute duties of downsizing, retrenchment, whilst participating in mergers and finding better ways of making profits amidst global competition, even to the disadvantage of the proletariat. Hence, Ukpere and Slabbert (2009, p. 39) note:

In recent times, top managers have been lured to motivate and promote unemployment and under-employment in most organisations. For example, when a French branch of IBM retrenched 122,000 workers and reduced their total wage cost by a third between 1991 and 1995, the management board rewarded those directors that were in charge of downsizing with non-pay related bonuses of 5.8 million dollars each.

In Zimbabwe, employers are organised into an industry and form a regulatory body, which manages their employment relations through a National Employment Council (Madhuku, 2015). Employers in each industry form an employer's association, which is a grouping of employers from several organisations that operate in the same industry. The grouping of employers into associations helps them to amass power and unity of purpose to play both societal and political roles (Bendix, 2007). Some of the employer national associations in Zimbabwe, as identified by Mahapa and Bhebhe (2014), are:

- The Employers Confederation of Zimbabwe (EMCOZ);
- The Confederation of Zimbabwe Industry (CZI);
- The Zimbabwe National Chambers of Commerce (ZNCC);
- The Confederation of British Industries (CBI);
- The Bankers Association of Zimbabwe (BAZ);
- The Chamber of Mines;
- The Commercial Farmers Union (CFU); and
- The Zimbabwe Farmers Union (ZFU).

The majority of employers in Zimbabwe are transnational corporations, and according to Dunning (1997), the concept of globalisation is on the emergence of a global economy driven by transnational

companies. Indeed, developments in Zimbabwe's labour relations is attributed to the high influential power of transnational companies and international monetary institutions that called for liberalisation of the labour market for improved economic growth (Sachikonye, 2001). Most of the current transnational companies in Zimbabwe established themselves before independence, and as a way of controlling their interests, they made sure that conditions to ensure FDI are skewed to their favour for continued control of the labour market, even after independence. Adusei (2009, p. 2) argues that:

"The conditionalities are nothing more than a smokescreen designed to ensure that Europeans never lose their grip on the resources of their former colonies. Some of these conditionalities include instituting secret memorandums of agreement, subsidies to foreign corporations and massive tax concessions."

Transnational companies are so powerful that they direct or influence policy in resident nations, as their revenues exceed the national incomes of most nations, and Sklair (2002) notes that the largest TNCs have accumulated assets and run annual sales far in excess of the GDP of most countries in the world. True to this, the Zimbabwean government felt this power when business, mainly transnational companies, withheld FDI after the state adopted the radical policies of land grab and price control. Shizha and Diallo (2015, p.124) comment that: *"Zimbabwe became more permeable and vulnerable to transnational and international developments. ... Power was no longer with politicians as people suffered from a dictatorship of the market."*

In the Zimbabwean experience, employers influence policy and labour legislation by way of collaborated efforts in the Tripartite Negotiating Forum (TNF) through their associations (Mahapa & Bhembe, 2014). To date, owing to efforts by employers, the TNF agreed to scrap the development levy placed on companies, removed the 2.5% sales tax that the government introduced in 1997, and mandated government to create an environment conducive to conducting business. It further lobbied reformation of labour laws, whilst conforming to international standards, and appealed to the government to pursue policies essential to business success in the global economy (Kanyenze, 2011).

There are increasing calls from employers, investors and international financial institutions for government to create an ease of doing business environment (World Bank, 2018). The new government administration, led by President Emmerson Mnangagwa, has embarked on improving and liberalising the labour market to lure investment. The President has assured transnational companies and investors with the motto **"Zimbabwe is open for business,"**(Chinamasa, 2017).

3. Research methodology

This article adopted a qualitative research approach based on the interpretivist research paradigm entrenched within a phenomenological research strategy. Primary data was obtained through semi-structured interviews and research participants memoirs. After obtaining informed consent, data was collected from a purposive sample of 14 participants. Twelve (12) participants participated in face-to-face semi-structured interviews, while two wrote memoirs detailing their experiences, perceptions, and views regarding the phenomenon as they responded to the semi-structured questions. Participants were given code names like "Ben; Ryan" and these were not their real names. Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed and the data was cleaned in preparation for analysis initially using Nvivo 10 and further analysis was done using manual coding. Nodes were generated and further analysed and grouped together to form themes that were used to answer the research question and objective. Figure 1 below illustrates the data analysis procedure used.



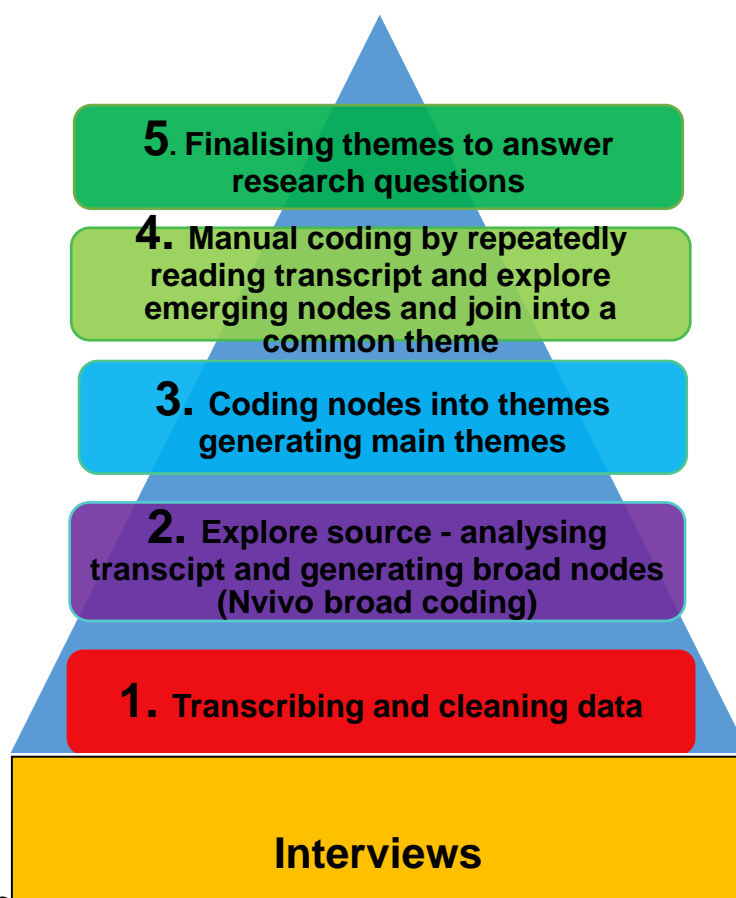


Figure 1. Steps taken from data collection to analysis
Source: Author's fieldwork

4. Data presentation and discussion of findings

The objective of this article is to understand the impact of globalisation on labour legislation. The findings identified the theme **globalisation has impact on labour relations**.

4.1. Globalisation has impact on labour relations

Research findings showed that employers and employees have learned to co-exist, collaborate, and through co-determination, engage each other in negotiations and dialoguing in the works councils. This is evidenced in Kuda's discourse who noted:

"I changed my approach from radicalism to a social democratic platform where I believe that the two opposite systems should co-exist and should come together and collectively look into issues affecting them. This concept influenced co-determination in Germany where employees were influenced to come up with solutions to problems" (Kuda, Transcript, 12 June 2019, p. 3).

The impact of globalisation on labour relations in Zimbabwe showed both positive and negative effects. However, the negative effects of globalisation were more pronounced than the positives as in the following discourses of participants.

"Globalisation has impacted positively on labour relations at the workplace through workplace democracy. Employees were given a voice to negotiate, discuss and raise issues that concern them through workers' committees" (Ben Transcript, 12 April 2019, p.3).

“I think it had a negative impact on labour relations at the workplace. The right to real collective bargaining was taken away. The right to collective job action was also taken away. There is no fairness at the workplace between employer and employees” (Simon Transcript, 12 May 2019, p.4).

“The relations at the workplace were terribly affected. Employers started retrenchments and employees were suffering job losses...” (Jacob Transcript, 27 June 2019, p.4).

At the heart of the current article is the need to understand the impact of globalisation on labour relations and consequently explain the nature of the resultant labour relations. MacDonald (1997) argues that employer-employee relations are a result of several global factors. In fact, one participant (Ray, Transcript, 14 July 2019, p. 13) noted: *“I would like to believe that the relationship is now complicated”* owing to employer-employee antagonism. For example, employees advocate for implementation of best global standards in all facets of employer-employee relations. Conversely, employers try to contain employee demands by advancing the need to be globally competitive, and to follow international monetary institutions' recommendations on policy direction and business growth.

4.2. Nature of labour relations at the dawn of globalisation in Zimbabwe

Research findings yielded two major composites, and these two factors envisage the characteristics and nature of Zimbabwe's labour relations at the advent of globalisation. The emerging concepts are (1) employee participation, and (2) perpetuation of inherent antagonism.

4.2.1. Employee participation

Findings demonstrated that because of liberalisation of the labour market and industrial democracy, employees and their unions have changed from a radical labour relations approach to a more collaborative and interactive approach, characterised by high employee involvement in dialogue, and involvement in decision-making. Whiteley (2004) notes that unions and worker's committee representatives dropped their militant nature and adopted a cooperative approach with employers. Indicative of this finding, Sachikonye and Rafttopoulos (2018) declare that the impact of global changes in production affected changes in labour relations significantly, and employees became highly willing to collaborate with employers, as union density continued to depreciate.

Bendix (2007) states that the involvement of workers in issues that affect them is on the rise, and it helps to build solidarity with employees, creating a sense of belonging, and trust in the company. Employers have come to realise the importance of building sound labour relations through employee involvement, while a study participant, a human resources manager, elucidated the importance of employee participation by noting that:

“Employers have come to a realisation that employee participation is key to productivity. Collective bargaining and employee involvement have now improved which have made workplace relations better in the sense that the parties collectively discuss issues affecting them” (Simba Transcript, 7 August 2019, p.3).

However, in organisations that depend on out-sourcing and labour broking, unions and worker's committees do not even exist.

“If you look at the relationship, there is a shift currently in this issue of worker's committees. In the telecoms industry and NGOs 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 worker's committee. If any, the employees will have to do it at the broker's offices or at the premises of the out-sourced company” (Mark Transcript, 10 August 2019, p. 4).

A similar concept exists in special economic zones, as one of the research participants revealed:

The company applied for an interdict to bar the union from representing employees in Beitbridge (Ryan Transcript, 14 July 2019 p.2).

Employees, their representatives, and unions in Zimbabwe find themselves in a precarious situation, hence it becomes increasingly important to ensure survival instead of growth and influence. Thus, under globalisation, unions and their workers opted to collaborate with their employers rather than to use confrontation to ensure their continued existence (Brione & Nicholson, 2012).

4.3. Perpetuation of inherent antagonism

Findings illustrated that globalisation further widened the gap between employees' needs and employers' investment aims, thus amplifying the strife and mistrust that already existed in labour relations. What lies at the centre of this finding is the long-established opposition of capital to labour propagated by world market demands, global competition, FDIs, and the ease of doing business mantra. This was enunciated in several participants' remarks as follows:

"The relations are strained... There is no trust and sense of belonging, which affect production and employers usually loose experienced employees. There are more negatives as compared to positives in labour relations because of globalisation" (Ryan Transcript, 14 July 2019 p. 3).

"It takes forever for Zimbabwe to align its laws with changing trends and as such employers and employees are always in disputes. Employers mainly are concerned with production whilst employees would feel that the changes occasioned by globalisation are unfair..." (Tracy Transcript, 14 July 2019, p. 3).

"Both parties are not satisfied. Employers think the current labour relations favour employees while employees feel that it favours the employer" (Lucia Transcript, 10 September 2019, p. 2).

Exenberger and Hartmann's (2007, p. 1) evidence on the Democratic Republic of Congo support the current study's findings, as they postulate that *"the Congo is one of the best examples of negative consequences of world market integration,"* and conclude that globalisation unleashed a *"vicious cycle"* of capitalists exploiting employees and resources. A case study by Utpal and Pragya (2014) at the Suzuki Motor Plant in India held that globalisation was responsible for labour troubles, involving violent protests that led to the killing of the company's human resources manager, closure of the plant for more than a month, and the dismissal of more than 500 employees.

4.4. Employee participation v inherent antagonism

When bringing these two findings together (employee participation and the perpetuation of inherent antagonism), it is evident that employer-employee relations are not evenly balanced in Zimbabwe. Hence, one participant said: *"The social war is of power dynamics. The employer has power backed by resources...at the end the one with resources is the most powerful and government listen to employers for need of FDI"* (Jacob Transcript, 27 June 2019, p. 4). This relates to the fact that employers enjoy considerable control over employees. Either the employees capitulate and collaborate with employers through participation, or they oppose forces of globalisation seriously, and suffer the consequences of dismissals, lockout, and non-renewal of contracts of employment. In his discourse, one participant narrated these issues by saying:

"In some cases, the employees' permanent contracts were terminated on three months' notice and were reengaged on new contracts as fixed term contracts. Most of the employees we have in industries currently are predominately contract employees on fixed term contracts who do not have job security" (Ryan Transcript, 14 July 2019, p.4)

Considering all these challenges, it is pertinent to proffer possible solutions to the globalisation conundrum if industrial tranquillity and level of fairness is to be attained in labour relations.

5. Recommendations

This article suggests a plethora of recommendation that can ameliorate the Zimbabwean labour relations situation.

5.1 A need to move towards an integrated labour relations conceptual framework

Actors to the labour relations puzzle have a duty to collaborate efforts and to give due consideration to all factors that influence labour relations, including those of global nature. This article recommends the conceptualisation of labour relations from a broader perspective through accommodating all factors that influence workplace relations. Labour relations is not merely a simple process of legislating the work environment, and neither is it a natural process of inputs and outputs in respect of relationships, but as Bendix (2007) puts it, it is a complicated integration of factors of both internal and external influence on employees and employers alike. All these unfold not in a vacuum, but in a global environment with state influence.

Global and national factors permeate through the veil of organisation and union/workers' perceptions and attitudes towards labour relations, and constantly influence parties' perceptions. Both internal and external factors help to shape employers and employee's opinions or positions, leading to certain behaviours towards labour relations. The resultant effect of the coming together of the parties' perceptions and behaviours, driven by each party's internal and external factors, culminate in a labour relations culture, which manifests in several ways (for example, conflict, collaboration, social dialogue, and others).

It is recommended that if all actors in labour relations are acquainted with the cumbersome factors emerging from globalisation that impact labour relations, they may be able to handle the negative symptoms that manifest at workplace level, and build a conducive labour relations culture. Below is the proposed integrated labour relations conceptual framework that synthesises these ideas into a model, Figure 2.

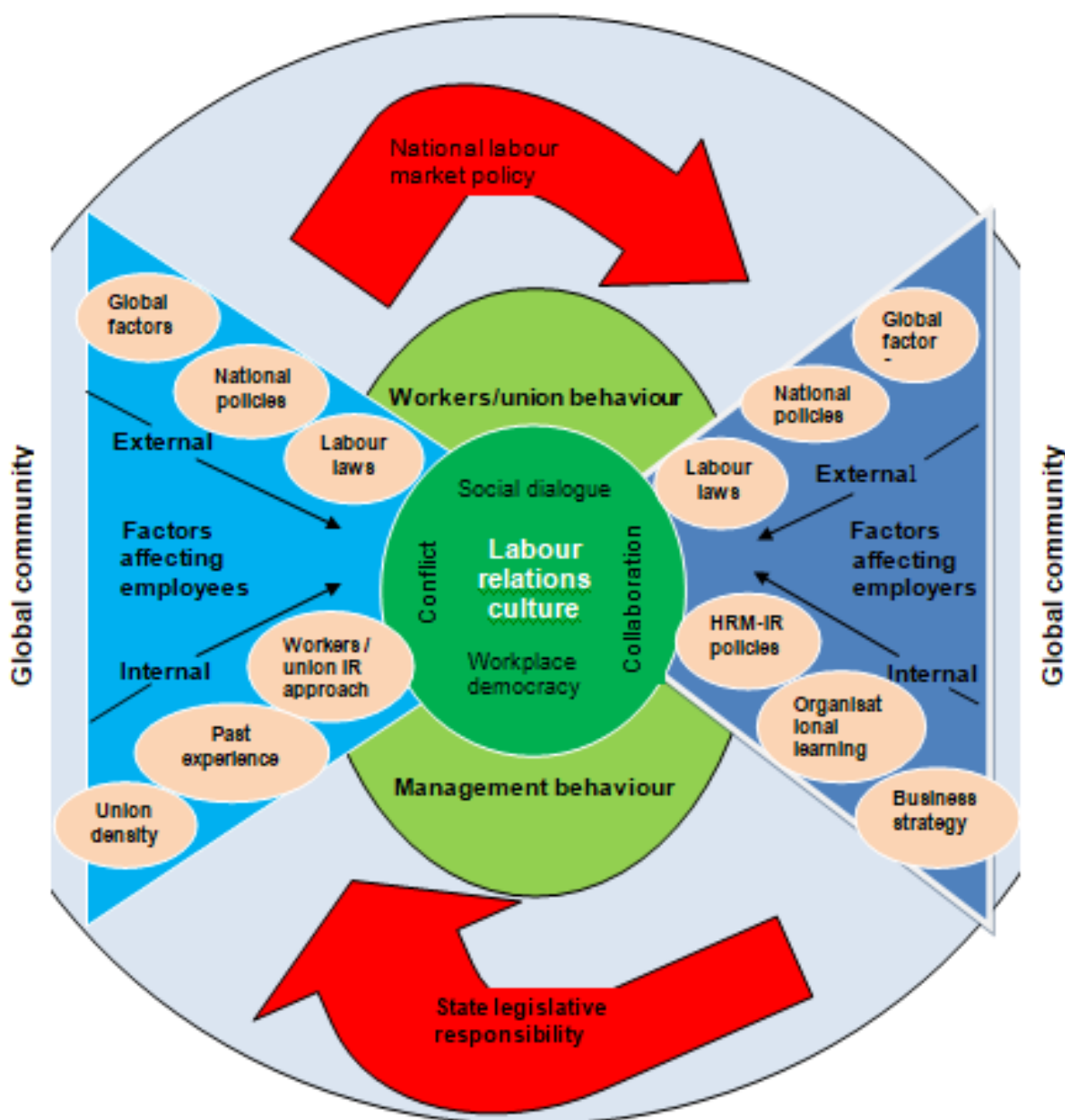


Figure 2: integrated labour relations conceptual framework
Source: Author's fieldwork

It is evident from the proposed framework above that the safety belt securing sound labour relations in the workplace rests mainly with the behaviour of employers and their employees. The influence of globalisation, as already demonstrated by this article's research findings and the reviewed literature, is that, it is like a ferocious wave that cuts through nation states, leading to the formulation of labour legislation and changes in government policy that affect employer-employee relations in the workplace. There is little that employers and employees can do to stop this wave; however, as suggested by the majority of the participants in this study, and supported by literature, bipartite partners can at least moderate the impact of globalisation through positive behavioural traits such as exercising tolerance towards each other, engaging in social dialogue, and collaboration to deal with common challenges.

5.2. Government and ministry responsible for labour administration to work closely with employers and unions

Although this article delineated its focus on employer-employee relations, the research findings showed that government is responsible for regulating the workplace through national labour laws. Furthermore, both employers and employees were not satisfied with the current labour relations environment. The Zimbabwean government, through its Ministry of Labour, is encouraged to consult with employers and employees to ensure that promulgated laws fit in the context of Zimbabwean workplaces, and address issues that affect parties at workplace level.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, it has been established that globalisation has impact on labour relations and contributes in shaping the nature of labour relations in Zimbabwe. It was observed that labour relations in Zimbabwe is characterised with two composites namely employee participation and inherent antagonism between employers and employees. Both employers and employees are not satisfied with the nature of labour relations in Zimbabwe. The article recommended that to ameliorate the nature of labour relations in Zimbabwe, employees and their employers require to work together in establishing good labour relations culture. An integrated labour relations theoretical framework was proposed as a holistic model that can help employers and employees to understand globalisation and labour relations in its totality from internal and external factors of national and global magnitude. If globalisation is understood from its broad perspective, it will be easy to deal with the challenges it occasion.

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