

The Role of Trade Union Activities in Fostering Job Satisfaction in Ghana's Mining Industry

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Abstract

Purpose: Generally satisfied employees are more productive than unhappy employees on average. However, this situation is different in Ghana's mining sector, as the sector attracts more than half of all foreign direct investment, yet mine workers express dissatisfaction over a variety of issues, including low pay and economic inequality, hazardous working conditions, and a lack of job security. Thus, this study investigates the role trade unions play in enhancing job satisfaction among employees in the Ghanaian mining industry and also delves into why Ghana's mining industry seems to be making socio-economic gains despite the apparent dissatisfaction of its employees.

Method: Qualitative content analysis was employed using over sixty studies published between 1965 and 2022 to create theoretical contexts and conclusions that expand on what is previously known about the role of trade union activities on job satisfaction among miners in Ghana.

Result: The study revealed that trade unions promote job satisfaction by pursuing non-traditional business interests such as human development advocacy for union members, job security for members, and educational and insurance facilities for family members of union members, among others, which are outside of their primary mandates of collective bargaining and grievance handling. Additionally, the survey revealed that, although Ghana's mining sector faces significant turnover as a

result of staff dissatisfaction, for every qualified worker who quits their job, a replacement is quickly made. This suggests an unceasing availability of labor for productivity in the mining sector, thus to some extent accounting for the socio-economic gains though its employees are unhappy.

Contribution: This study contributes to the literature on happiness economics as an element of the economic outcome by delving into the connection between the activities of trade unions and job satisfaction in Ghana's mining sector.

Keywords

Trade union, Job satisfaction, Job dissatisfaction, Mining industry, and Safety.

1. Introduction

The mining sector in Ghana contributes meaningfully to the national income of its economy (Bank of Ghana, 2022; Amponsah-Tawiah & Dartey-Baah, 2011), although estimates by the Danish Trade Union Development Agency (2020) depict that the very narrow mining sector, encompassing 0.8 percent of the entire employment share, was 14 percent of GDP by sector in 2018, which equaled US\$95,373 per employee per year. This scenario does not imply that returns from the Ghanaian mining sector largely meet the expected working conditions of employees in the sector, as working conditions in terms of safety and satisfaction in many mines remain poor (Emmanuel et al., 2018), thus making the connection between trade union participation and job satisfaction a critical space for examination as happiness or satisfaction may act as an element of economic outcome (Casinillo et al., 2021; Layard, 2006; Ulf-G, 2001).

The labor laws of Ghana permit workers to form and join associations of their choice without disapproval; however, there are a few exemptions; for example, military, police, jail administration, and other security staff are prohibited from exercising this right (Danish Trade Union Development Agency, Analytical Unit, 2020), as it is speculated that such unions may clothe the security system against the ordinary civilian. In essence, when such security agencies are loyal to their unions, the chances are that subsequently, they may be disloyal to the good of the public.

The participation of trade union membership in Ghana was around 500,000 in 2008 (Asamani et al., 2013) and rose to over 800,000 in 2019 (Ghana Labour Market Profile Report, 2020). Trade unions are also increasingly engaging in lobbying governments and their agencies for legislation that favors workers and their families (Befort et al., 2009). Better wages, flexible work hours, benefits, a conducive working environment, and security are among the expectations of trade union members that may contribute to their satisfaction. The Ghana Federation of Labor (GFL) and the Trades Union Congress of Ghana, under which the Ghana Mine Workers Union (GMWU) falls, are Ghana's two main

public trade unions. The Ghana Mine Workers Union (GMWU) had an enrollment membership of 16,047 as of 2020, with the aim of addressing concerns about welfare and satisfaction among miners in Ghana. A share of the primary motives confronting miners and their alliance with trade unions in Ghana are the instability of business, pervasive underemployment, low wages, general helpless working conditions, low government-managed retirement plans, and compensation disparities (Ghana Labour Market Profile Report, 2020). With this said, the underlying motivation for forming or joining unions is collective bargaining and reducing the power asymmetry between employers and employees. Unions can achieve equality, equity, fairness, and respect for human and workers' rights in this way, and there is strength in worker unity and collectivism (Ferne et al., 2002). Bryson et al. (2004) see's a negative relationship between trade union membership and job satisfaction, implying that dissatisfied union members would report job dissatisfaction regardless of their union status. Likewise, evidence from Laroche's (2017) survey on meta-analysis from studies published in academic journals indicates that unionization is negatively related to job satisfaction, although not in every country. On the contrary, Budd (2004) asserts that the union negotiates contracts and conditions with employers, keeping employee satisfaction high and protecting workers from unsafe or unfair working conditions. Job satisfaction is therefore related to motivation, productivity, work performance, and life satisfaction (Abuhashh et al., 2019). On the other hand, Artz (2010) holds a different opinion, concluding that salary and company culture did not significantly contribute to job satisfaction but that independent variables such as work-life balance, growth, and managerial support did.

Job satisfaction is essential for the growth and survival of all organizations (Lange, 2021). As per Owusu (2014), the idea of job satisfaction has been quite possibly the most explored concept in social science studies, as employee satisfaction is exceptionally attractive for any association, institution, or body that needs to be significant in its market sphere (Aryaa et al. 2023). Siang (2015) depicts job satisfaction as the feelings one has in regard to one's work and how cheerful one feels about that work. This can be influenced by many factors, for example, organization strategies and relational connections. Holland (2018) expressed that job satisfaction is known to impact trade union representatives and their members. On the other hand, unsatisfied workers are known to have lower efficiency levels, more occupation stress, and higher turnover rates. This suggests that satisfied workers may have an inspirational perspective toward work, which prompts the best job outcomes, while disappointed workers have a negative attitude toward work, which yields low performance in general. This stance is affirmed in research conducted by SgROI

(2015) in collaboration with the Social Market Foundation and the University of Warwick's Centre for Competitive Advantage in the Global Economy, which revealed that generally satisfied employees are 12 percent more productive than unhappy employees on average. The situation is however different in Ghana (*see Appendix A*) as the sector attracts more than half of all foreign direct investment (International Council on Mining Metals, 2016) yet mine workers raise concerns about low wages and economic inequality, unsafe working conditions, lack of job security and exploitative contracts among others (Owusu, 2020; Mensah, 2019; Tetteh, 2021). Also, the mining sector in Ghana generates more than one-third of all export revenues (*see Appendix B*), making it the largest tax-paying sector in Ghana (Bank of Ghana, 2022) yet experiences high levels of burnout and isolation among mineworkers often due to long working hours in remote job locations away from family and friends (Asamoah, 2021) leading to work-life balance adverse repercussions (Ibeh et al., 2023; Bharathi et al., 2018; Ramachandran et al., 2012; Boohene et al., 2012). This study therefore looks at why Ghana's mining industry seems to be making socio-economic gains yet its employees are unhappy (Victor et al., 2018; Coffey, 2013) and ultimately explores the role of trade union activities in fostering job satisfaction among miners in Ghana.

2. Research Methodology

The study employs qualitative content analysis from over sixty studies published between 1965 and 2022 to create theoretical contexts and conclusions that expand on what is previously known about the role of trade union activities on job satisfaction among Ghanaian miners.

Theories under Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to how happy a person is with their employment. Affective (emotional) and cognitive (evaluative) components can be used to measure this.

Affect theory (Nahar et al., 2013) - This theory's central tenet is that job happiness is determined by the gap between what an individual wants and what they have.

The basis of dispositional theory (Staw et al., 2005) is that job happiness is, to some extent, a personal characteristic that differs from person to person.

Equity theory (Adams, 1965; Walster and Walster, 1973) - This theory is based on the idea of justice; for example, if two people with the same qualifications and tasks receive pay raises, one of them may feel unsatisfied.

The basis of the discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1999b) is that someone who is unable to fulfill their obligations will feel dissatisfied, and vice versa.

The two-factor theory by (Frederick Herzberg, 1968; Hackman et al., 1976) is on the premise that motivational elements like recognition and success increase

productivity while hygienic factors like compensation and supervision reduce employee unhappiness.

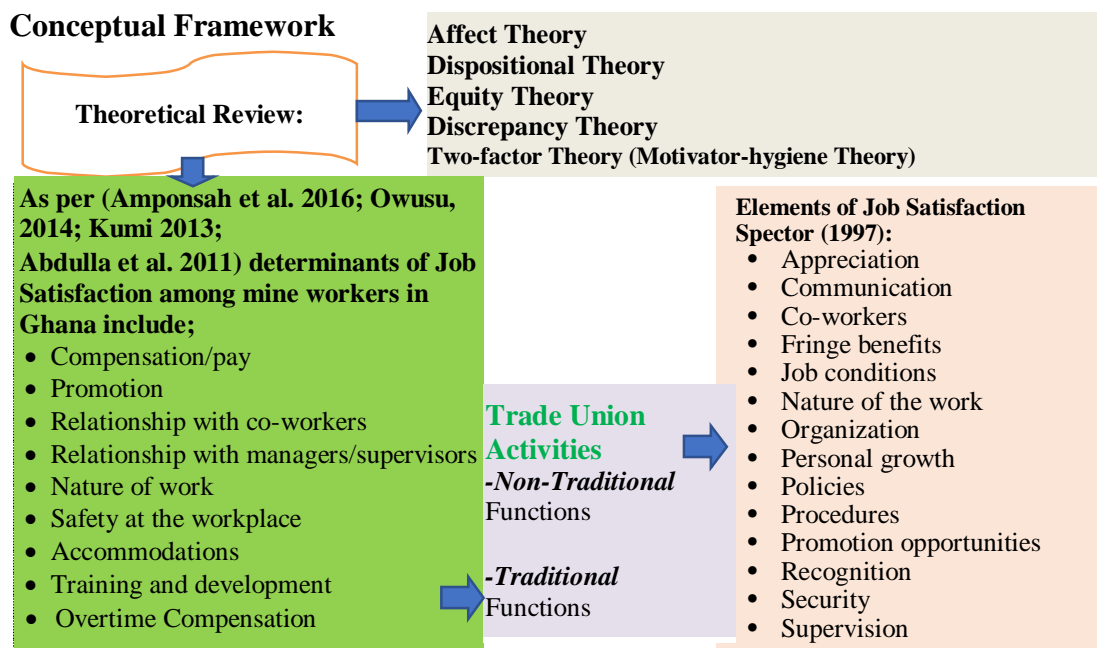
Theories under Trade Union Role

According to Poole (1986), a trade union is a group of employees who are dedicated to "maintaining or improving the conditions of their employment," such as securing better wages and benefits, bettering working conditions, raising safety standards, establishing complaint procedures, creating policies governing employees' status (such as policies governing promotions and just-cause termination requirements), and enhancing and protecting workers' bargaining power.

Sectional Bargainer: This outlines the interests of a specific group of employees at the national, industry, and plant levels. Examples include multiple unions, craft unions, white-collar unions (Gary-bobo et al, 2014)

Business Oriented Role: In this capacity, unions represent both workers' and the organization's interests. They believe that the fate of their members and the organization are inextricably linked, and they swim or drown together (Mahadevan, 2001).

Unions as Change Agents: In this case, unions take the initiative and drive change rather than allowing it to be driven by them (Milner et al, 2017).



Source:- Author Compilation

Figure 1:- Conceptual Framework of Trade Union Role in Fostering Job Satisfaction in the Ghana’s Mining Industry

Figure 1 presents the interconnection between variables emanating from theories and empirical studies and how these variables are further linked to the activities of trade unions in the mining sector.

The following connections can be postulated considering the conceptual framework in Figure 1:

- Proposition 1: Non-traditional functions of trade unions enhance Job satisfaction in the Ghanaian mining industry
- Proposition 2: Traditional functions of trade unions enhances Job satisfaction in the Ghanaian mining industry

3. Result and Discussion

Contribution of Trade Union Activities in Fostering Job Satisfaction

According to Molina et al. (2016) and Molina (2008), the importance of trade unions cannot be overstated. Based on this premise Rutherford et al. (2019) argue that trade unions are a significant contributory instrument to staff retention. According to Owusu (2014), the determinants of job satisfaction among mine workers in Ghana include compensation or pay, promotion, relationship with co-workers, relationship with managers or supervisors, nature of work, safety at the workplace, accommodations, training and development, and overtime compensation. Further, according to Victor et al. (2018), the overall satisfaction of an employee with his job is the result of a combination of factors, and financial compensation is only one of them. This affirms an investigation by Abdulla et al. (2011) and Rabbanee et al. (2012), which showed that wages, an unsafe workplace, poor correspondence, inadequate coordination, favoritism on examinations and special issues, high duty on compensations, poor well-being, and security strategies, among others, are causes of dissatisfaction in the workplace. However, an inquiry by Tshivhase et al. (2018) and Owusu (2014) gives an interesting view on the matter by indicating that "work dissatisfaction in the Ghanaian mining sector does not just rely upon low compensation; it additionally relies upon out-of-line advancement practices, particularly where advancement depends on "whom you know" or one's connection with somebody in the workplace."

Further, a study by Anning-Dorson et al. (2021; Owusu, 2014; Kumi, 2013) showed that trade unions through the GWMU have become influential in the Ghanaian mining industry through activities such as collective bargaining, research and planning, training and education, policing employment contracts, leading strike actions for safer and better living conditions, and engaging in public advocacy to advance their workers' interests. The GMWU, on the other

hand, emphasizes a non-traditional business interest in improving worker satisfaction (GMWU, 2020, 2022). For instance, a classic is the Golden Pride Savings and Loans Company Limited, set up to offer adaptable financial instruments and monetary cautioning to meet the financial necessities of union members and their relatives (GMWU Report, 2020).

Furthermore, the GMWU provides job security for their members, a long-term local region financial strengthening project for miners' spouses by offering them monetary assistance that helps their families, educational services for the staff's children, and so on.

Kumi (2013) discovered that trade unions have become influential in the Ghanaian mining industry at the moment because they play extremely important roles in regions such as workers' wage exchanges, debate goals, professional stability, and advancements. Furthermore, the Ghana TUC provides strategic interventions to its members for appropriate labor market arrangements, training, and information dissemination. Likewise, Ghana's trade unions have been supporting the sanction of ILO Convention 158, which directs that a worker's work not be ended without reason (TUC, 2016). Also, Ghanaian trade unions have consistently supported social exchange as one of the critical pillars of a decent work plan, while opposing CEOs' attempts to coerce laborers and governments to recognize work adaptability and pay freezes as debilitated work principles. An examination by Owusu (2014) likewise found that discussion was high on the plan, clarifying why there has been practically zero mechanical agitation seen in the Ghanaian mining area, taking everything into account. Kumi (2013) sets this degree of accomplishment for procedural equity set up by the associations. The method permits representatives to differ on choices or decisions made by CEOs. This advancement, among others, has prompted mining companies to develop tools that allow representatives to appeal decisions that affect them. As a result of demonstrating certified responsibilities and genuine authority, mining organizations have advanced worker fulfillment. This has incited numerous managers inside the mining business space to extend regard for and comply with representatives' privileges in the work environment.

Unceasing Availability of Labor in Ghana's Mining Sector

Ghana's mining sector is one of the largest contributors to its economy, providing employment for thousands of workers both directly and indirectly. Despite the challenges associated with the industry, the supply of labor remains consistent, driven by socioeconomic, demographic, and structural factors. Ephraim & Ephraim (2016) assert that unfortunately, after spending huge sums

of money going through the human resource cycle of attracting, developing, motivating, and managing performance, it is regrettable that most mining companies are unable to retain their employees as they leave. Similarly, Amponsah-Tawiah et al. (2016) and Oppong (2013) argue that in Ghana, employees pose a completely new set of challenges, especially in the mining sector, where there is a high labor turnover and frequent accident manifestations. It has therefore become more difficult to retain employees as the pools of talent are tapped out. On the issue of high turnover among miners, the GMWU (2021) found that for every standard worker who resigned between 2016 and 2021, the same role was filled by a non-standard worker with inferior employment conditions. One of the key drivers of labor availability in Ghana's mining sector is economic necessity. For many individuals, mining represents a reliable source of income, especially in rural areas where economic opportunities are limited. The mining sector serves as a safety net for those struggling to meet basic needs. Armah and Aidoo (2020) argue that the poverty prevalent in Ghana's mining communities compels many individuals to seek employment in the sector, even under suboptimal conditions.

4. Conclusion

The study cites trade union activities significantly increase job satisfaction among employees in the Ghanaian mining industry because they demonstrate sincere commitment to advancing members' needs by pursuing non-traditional business interests such as human development advocacy for union members, job security for members, and educational and insurance facilities for family members of union members, among others, which are outside of their primary mandates of collective bargaining and grievance handling. Thus, to some extent, job satisfaction is directly linked to the productivity of customer-centric companies and non-customer-centric companies like the mining sector. Furthermore, the Ghanaian mining sector faces significant turnover, but for every qualified worker who quits their job, a replacement is quickly recruited. This suggests an unceasing supply of available labor for productivity in the mining sector. This could, among other things, account for why the mining industry seems to be making socio-economic gains although its employees are unhappy. It is recommended that trade unions in the Ghanaian mining industry seek and deploy strategies that ensure that adequate safety devices and other good working conditions are made available by mining companies in Ghana. Additionally, trade union leaders can provide more awareness of non-traditional business interests such as insurance schemes, financial support for their

members, and procedural expectations in submitting complaints for collective redress.

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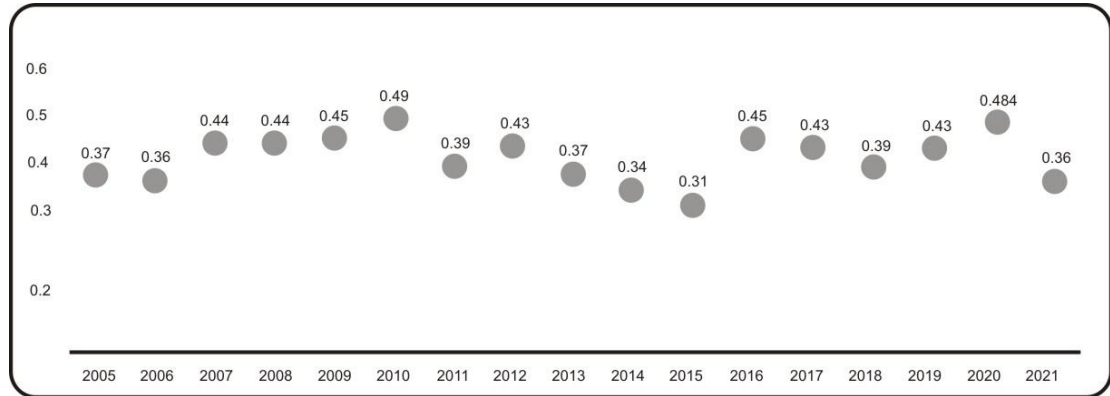
APPENDIX- A

Table1:- Socio-economic Contributions of Mining Sector

Socio-economic Contributions	2016 (US\$)	2017 (US\$)	2018 (US\$)	2019 (US\$)	2020 (US\$)	2021 (US\$)
Education	1,295,078	2,262,953.86	1,625,156.61	1,625,356.11	1,705,345.45	2,492,048.62
Health	1,185,726	1,617,814.33	694,869.06	1,096,898.85	2,481,194.57	1,395,946.04
Electricity	396,225	407,087.71	353,329.42	367,372.19	257,132.64	246,847.23
Roads	3,295,488	7,771,834.66	15,109,280.32	14,607,694.71	9,312,134.50	5,523,933.29
Water	343,497	395,808.93	495,698.12	168,210.33	293,234.52	2,109,355.04
Housing	508,729	88,258.81	414,773.93	290,734.58	196,093.10	448,062.02
Agro-Industry		27,702.10	2,053.39	3,344.07	150,862.73	67,540.73
Agriculture	54,097	219,998.67	819,221.70	626,102.46	452,070.68	683,101.64
Sanitation	208,555	235,058.29	133,275.00	195,450.38	137,201.44	225,821.02
Resettlement Action Plan	3,380	2,111,615.41	21,681.27	28,695.55	4,084.27	3,232,355.06

Source:- Ghana Chamber of Mines (2022)

APPENDIX-B



Source:- Bank of Ghana (2022)

Figure 2:- Share of Mineral Receipts in Total Exports (2005–2021)