

The Impact of Labour Unions on the South African Mining Industry

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The mining industry has played a significant role in the development of South Africa by being a top employer and foreign exchange earner. With the large workforce, labour unions have also emerged as an important factor that moderates how people, companies, and the government interact. In recent years, union-led mass actions have been on the limelight due to their violent nature that endangers human life, the reputation of the stakeholders, and compromises the economic contributions of the mining sector. The intent of this research was to investigate the impact of the labour unions on the mining industry in South Africa.

Keywords: labour unions, labour relations, workers welfare in the mining sector, collective bargaining

INTRODUCTION

The mining industry in South Africa (SA) has transformed substantially since the end of apartheid that had a substantial influence on workers' rights across racial contexts (Wolpe, 2018). The workers' rights in the country have been improving for all citizens. South Africa is ranked among the most important mining nations regionally and across the globe. The country has rich and diverse mineral deposits that include Coal, Platinum Group Metals (PGM), gold, and diamonds. The mining industry is a leading contributor to SA's economy, and the country has become a regional leader, dominating regional markets and being a competitive player in the global mineral market. The mining sector contributes about \$357 billion to the economy, and it is the largest in the African continent, with reserves worth about \$2.5 trillion. About 5.3% of SA's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is linked to the mining sector (Fedderke and Pirouz, 2002). Additionally, it contributes substantially to the creation of employment and business opportunities, whereby about half a million people are employed directly; with another half a million working in related sectors. The mining industry also accounts for about 60% of the revenue gained by the country from exports through mining, minerals, and secondary beneficiated products. From this perspective, the mining industry is a critical pillar of SA's economy and sustainability (Fine, 2018).

The transformation of SA from an agricultural economy to become the most industrialized country in Africa began in the 19th century after the discovery of the Witwatersrand Goldfields in 1886. Diamonds had already been discovered in the country in the 1860s in the city of Kimberley in Northern Cape Province. These discoveries increased employment opportunities for development, including the construction of infrastructure such as the railway system. The vast mineral resources in the country influenced military confrontations between the British Empire and the Boers between 1899 and 1902 (Levinson, 1998). With limited mechanisation in the minefields, the British colonial authority, which had overcome the Boers, implemented policies and strategies that were focused on driving the African

population to supply mine labour. The increased involvement of Africans in the mining sector offered an opportunity for cheap labour and development of urban mining centres, although they were not effectively integrated into the South African society (Miller, Desai and Lee-Thorp, 2000; Barchesi, 2018). The long-term impact of these policies was devastating, including the development of segregation ideologies that resulted in apartheid. Additionally, the discovery of minerals in the country led to the emergence of mining houses that facilitated foreign investments in the mining sector. The mining houses such as the Anglo American, De Beers, Goldfields, and Harmony dominated the SA economy until the 1990s (Levinson, 1998). These organisations had a substantial impact on the money and capital markets due to their ownership and control of investment banks and ventures that established mining operations on other mineral resources besides gold. The organisations also had a substantial impact on employment for the people in the country, offering opportunities for highly skilled individuals and monopolising the unskilled labour market (Moodie, 2015).

The challenges faced in the mining sector in the 1980s led to the establishment of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), which organised the first industrial strike in 1984 with the aim of influencing employment conditions. The organisation facilitated better labour representation, which resulted in improved compensation for unskilled workers (Van Zyl, Bam, and Steenkamp, 2016). Nevertheless, this resulted in increased pressure from shareholders for the mining companies, which by 1988, led to massive job losses in the sector (Miller, Desai and Lee-Thorp, 2000). The NUM highlights the initial steps in collective bargaining for workers that faced substantial challenges in the mining sector in SA. Since then, the NUM and other labour unions in SA have become key players in labour representation through advocacy as well as extreme measures such as strikes to achieve the employees' objectives (Zokwana & Bailey, 2014). Exemplified by the actions and achievements of the NUM, it is evident that labour unions in SA have had positive and negative impacts in the mining sector (Moodie and von Holdt, 2015). Despite the significance of the mining industry to the overall South Africa economy and the potential impact that labour unions are likely to have on it, no substantive research has been undertaken to determine how labour unions can impact the sector (Fairbrother, 2008).

Labour Unions in South Africa

Workers in different parts of the world have organised themselves into trade/labour unions. Labour unions refer to a group of workers who have united with the intention of articulating and meeting some interests such as increased bargaining power for better working conditions, workers' safety, and better remuneration packages (Craver, 1998; Hagedorn, Paras, Greenwich, et al., 2016). South Africa is not an exception. The history of labour unions in South Africa dates back to the 19th century, although by then, only whites were allowed to join labour unions (Hart and Padayachee, 2013). The changes experienced in the relationship between employees and labour unions in modern capitalist South Africa can be attributed to four historical periods, which include:

- The emergence of a capitalist economy from the mid-19th Century following the establishment of the British colonial rule.
- The establishment of white administration in 1910 under the Act of Union, which introduced the strategy of Segregation.
- The Apartheid era since 1948.
- Reforms to address apartheid leading to a monopoly capitalist country.

The mining sector played a fundamental role during these periods in economic development. The need for cheap labour in the mining industry influenced by capitalist interests coupled with the historical oppression of the Black people in the country set the basis for increased interests to foster effective engagement of labour unions in transforming the SA society (Soyapi and Kotzé, 2017). The low yields of the gold-containing ore in the early 1990s implied that there was a need for huge capital investments to acquire expensive mining machinery and a lot of labour was required for the mines to be profitable (Hart and Padayachee, 2013). Resultantly, only wealthy capitalists such as Cecil John Rhodes and Barney Barnato had the financial capacity to engage in the industry. Resultantly, the mining companies gained

substantial power, with Cecil John Rhodes becoming Prime Minister of the Cape Colony. These developments laid the basis for the country's political economy that is experienced even in the modern-day, characterised by white monopoly capital and cheap labour from black Africans (Power et al., 2016). The capitalists in the mining sector established a system where black male workers were employed in the mines and sheltered in policed compounds. They were segregated based on their tribes and were required to carry passes in cities and homesteads, while their children and wives stayed in the reserves. These are some of the factors that influenced the struggle between labour and capitals and subsequently increased organisation among workers in the mines, a phenomenon that was extended across the black labour market in the country (Hamann, 2009). The workers established trade unions that were established in different forms and made up of different groups of the working class, including the urban industrialised workers and the commuting migrant workers (Fairbrother, 2008).

One of the major influences in the development of labour unions in SA was the workers and peasants revolution in 1917. During this time, the black workers in the country had not established effective organisations to push for their interests. Despite the existence of trade unions, they were largely made up of white worker, and the Labour Party, which was a socialist political organisation, collaborated with the capitalists and only allowed white members. With the influence and politics from the Russian Revolution, workers in SA engaged in the International Socialist League, while others established the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) (Filatova, 2012). Most of the people involved in these organisations were middle-class white people. Gradually, the ideologies of the Russian Revolution spread to black workers, who faced substantial challenges. It was not until the early 20th century when the first labour union known as the Industrial Workers of Africa was formed. This workers' union was the first one to organise black workers (Van der Walt, 2004; Gentle, Callinicos, Jansen, et al., n.d). Since then, the wave of labour unionism has swept all across South Africa, an aspect which has seen many workers join various labour unions.

Labour unions across the globe have attracted substantial interest among researchers and policymakers due to their significance and complexity (Paret, 2015). In SA, trade unions have emerged as vocal organisations that advocate for the workers' rights, with a substantial impact on policy formulation (Seekings and Natrass, 2015). Additionally, they also influence the opinions on economic issues in the country because they influence how employees engage in different sectors as well as their commitment to productivity and organisational performance. The SA labour unions impact on the public discourse and are perceived to be entities that lead to unnecessary rigidity in employment and productivity (Bond and Desai, 2017). Suggestively, despite their significance in collective bargaining, they tend to have a negative impact on the labour market. This impact emerges from their engagement in determining wages, influencing political trends, and influencing how employees engage with their employers (Hayter, 2015). From this perspective, the actions of the labour unions can lead to improved wages, wage equality, and improved employment conditions, but also put pressure on employers (Marais et al., 2018). Additionally, the benefits associated with the labour unions can be transferred to individuals who are not members through the Industrial Council system. The common labour unions in South Africa include the Congress of South Africa Trade Unions (COSATU), which integrates the interests of various organisations in the country, with more than two million members (Lewis, 2005). Other labour unions include the Federation of Unions of South Africa (FEDUSA) and National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU), all of which are affiliated with the International Trade Union Confederation.

Trade unions in South Africa have become very powerful, with the capacity to impact on the government as well as the private sector. In ensuring that their demands are met, labour unions provoke their members to partake industrial actions including strikes, picketing, and demonstrations that result in a discontinuity in production and manufacturing processes and work stoppages. Such industrial actions have had a significant impact on various sectors in South Africa. One of the most affected sectors is the mining industry in the country, being one of the key sectors in South Africa, employing most workers in the country (Paret, 2017). Due to unionised workers in the mining industries, the sector has experienced disruption of its operations by rampant strikes organised by the labour unions (Hurt, 2014).

Problem Statement

Historically, the functions of trade/labour unions in SA have primarily been influenced by political interests. Since its establishment in 1985, COSATU has played an imperative role in unifying competing unions and federations in the country, especially in the fight against apartheid. The actions of the organisation include coordinating different undertakings that paralysed work through general strikes with countrywide support from workers. In the modern-day, the organisation and its affiliates have compromised the prospects for growth with little growth in employment (Manwa and Wijeweera, 2016). Additionally, the high unemployment rates increase the challenges faced in the economic growth of the country, which might deter investments and cripple the economy (Bond and Mottiar, 2013). This implies that the burden of the trade unions is substantially increasing, which calls for a strategic approach. The challenges faced in the sector include the increased adoption of technological solutions in the mining sector, which has presented a permanent threat for the workers, including reduced job opportunities, layoffs, and reduced wages for workers in different positions (Graham, Hjorth, and Lehdonvirta, 2017). The failure of the trade unions to advocate for the workers' rights had a substantial impact on the mining industry (Trimikliniotis, Gordon and Zondo, 2008). Furthermore, the workers across the country join the trade unions with the hope of benefiting from the premium wages that are associated with union memberships and the guarantee that their legitimate rights are protected.

Over the past few decades, the mining industry in South Africa was very attractive for investors as a result of the low cost of labour and electricity. However, this favourable business environment has changed as investors have no control over labour costs, and labour unrests believed to be contributed by unionised workers. The labour market in the country is heavily regulated compared to other developing nations, with SA ranked 7th out of 139 countries that are most restrictive. The high wages and the bureaucracy experienced in the country have relatively been detrimental in attracting investors, and the government has shown little effort in fostering a conducive environment for investors (Anand, Kothari, and Kumar, 2016). The labour issues in the country have made it difficult for mining companies to realise profits to pay back their investments (Trimikliniotis, Gordon and Zondo, 2008). Most people are also laid off, leading to an escalation of unemployment rates in the country. Additionally, Williams, Davies, and Chinguno (2015) show that there have been substantial challenges in the mining sector and other industries due to increased demands among the workers, with an increased focus on standardising the labour market based on international standards. This is exemplified by the illegal strike in 2012 among workers in Lonmin, who were demanding a \$300 wage increase. The strike was led by two trade unions, NUM and the Association of Mine Workers and Construction Union (AMCU), which resulted in a senseless loss of lives among the striking workers. The organisations had conflicting interests, which resulted in the Marikana shooting, where ten miners died when the two groups clashed. Despite this, there was no substantial intervention by the police, union leaders, and the departments of labour and mineral resources. Consequently, 34 more mine workers were killed following clashes between the workers and the police (Hill and Maroun, 2015). This situation highlights the shortcomings in how trade unions and employees in the mining sector address the challenges that exist and strategise on future growth and development (Bond and Mottiar, 2013). The unions failed to offer effective direction and leadership to the workers during the crisis, compromising the organisational objectives and the welfare of the members. Similarly, the illegal strike among the workers highlights the lack of following the stipulated challenges in expressing their grievances (Cairncross and Kisting, 2016). Suggestively, the irresponsibility of the unions and workers has substantially impacted on the productivity of the mining sector, which highlights the need for increased efficiency in how labour unions engage workers. With this in mind, this research aims at examining the impact of labour unions on the mining industry.

Research Aim and Objectives

Despite the numerous employee unrests in South Africa and the fact that South Africa has one of the most well-established trade unions, no study has been undertaken to examine these labour unions based on their roles in resolving issues related to workers' welfare, the constitution of these labour unions, the negotiation tactics employed by these labour unions, and how these tactics impacts on the mining industry

and South Africa's economy. For the few years I have worked in the South African mining industry, it has dawned on me that labour unions, which are a common feature in South Africa's labour market can have a profound impact on the country's mining industry and the economy. Interested in becoming an expert in the topic in question by gaining more insights into the roles played by the different labour unions with respect to aspects such as the welfare of the workers, their process of constitution, based on their ranks, and whether their impact on the mining industry and the economy at large is positive or not, this research proposal seeks to explore in details and provide substantial answers based on the following objectives.

1. To explore the roles played by the labour unions in dealing with issues related to the worker's welfare
2. To find out how these labour unions are constituted in terms of ranks and also how they use their administrative powers to address issues affecting their members
3. What negotiation tactics are employed and what impact these tactics had on mining companies and on the workers' salaries and welfare through the collective bargaining process.

Research Questions

The research questions employed in this research correspond to the objectives. They are:

1. What are the roles played by the labour unions in in dealing issues related to the worker's welfare?
2. How are the labour unions constituted in terms of ranks and also how they use their administrative powers to address issues affecting their members?
3. What negotiation tactics are employed and what impact these tactics had on mining companies and on the workers' salaries and welfare through the collective bargaining process.

Significance and Justification

This research is imperative to understand the challenges faced by trade/labour unions and workers in the mining industry. Drawing from the insights gathered in the research, strategic undertakings can be made to foster change in how the mining industry operates. The research findings are important for different stakeholders that include companies and employers in the mining sector, the policymakers, labour union leaders and members, and workers in the mining industry across South Africa. The research will offer an opportunity to influence the necessary change by highlighting areas that might need further research to streamline the role of trade/labour unions in the mining industry with the existing and potential challenges in the SA economy.

Summary

This section shows that labour unions play an important role in the South African community. Historically, labour unions have shaped economic and political growth in the country. The challenges experienced in the recent past, including violent strikes that have led to the loss of life, imply that there is a need to review the role of these organisations in the mining sector. The South Africa mining industry is a key contributor to the economy, which makes it important to consider its stability and sustainability. This section highlights the historical development of the relationship between trade unions and the mining sector. Subsequently, the gaps in knowledge are identified and presented in the research questions. Focus on these issues can help this research to make conclusions that will lead to developments in the mining sector.

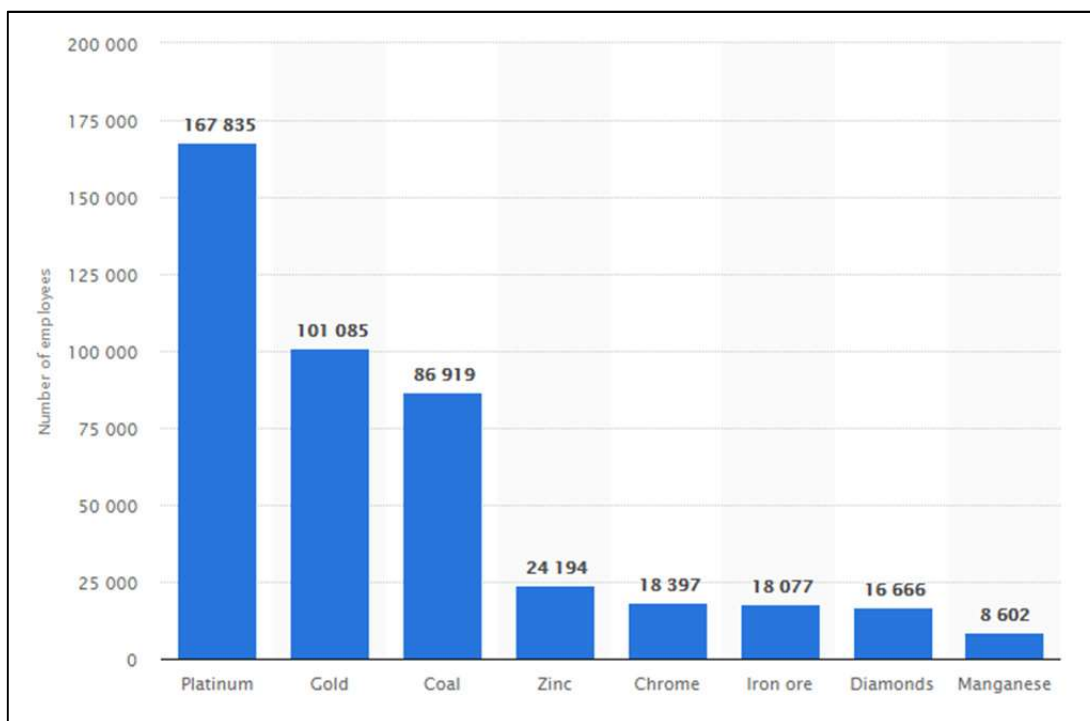
LITERATURE REVIEW

The country's mineral reserves include gold, diamond, platinum, coal, copper, and iron ore, which are found in large quantities. The mining industry contributes substantially to the country's GDP and employment, while the mining organisations operating in the country are major players in the global

industry. The country has the largest identified reserves of gold, platinum group metals, chrome ore, and manganese ore. Additionally, it has the second-largest reserves of zirconium, vanadium, and titanium. The importance of the industry is reflected in the fact that almost 100% of the country's cement and construction materials are sourced locally, including 80% of the steel used in the country. The country offers approximately 87.7% of the global platinum group metals, 80% of manganese, 72.4% of chromium, and 29.7% of gold (Neingo and Tholana, 2016). These products contribute substantially to the export commodities from South Africa, making the mining industry a top earner for the country's economy. Additionally, the discovery of minerals in the country fostered economic development, including road infrastructure, energy industry, manufacturing, construction, and transportation. Also, the increased economic activities associated with mining resulted in the development of cities such as Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Kimberly (Marais et al., 2018). These factors contributed to increased employment opportunities, which contributed to the development of trade/labour unions in the country. Until the modern-day, most of the country's economic growth is largely driven by the mining industry. The high unemployment rates in SA have influenced focus on the mining industry. The government's financial needs are also substantially covered by the mining sector. The country's untapped minerals show that the sector will continue to contribute substantially to the economic development of SA.

Figure 1 below shows the number of people working in different mining sectors in SA based on 2018 statistics. The data shows that the highest number of employees, approximately 167,835 work in the platinum mining sector. Drawing from the statistics, it is evident that the mining sector is a key contributor to employment in the country, which implies that it also contributes substantially to other industries related to the mining sector.

FIGURE 1
NUMBER OF PEOPLE EMPLOYED BY SOUTH AFRICA'S MINING INDUSTRY IN 2018 BY COMMODITY (GARSIDE, 2019)



Over the years, the South Africa mining sector has changed substantially with a slow growth compared to the dramatic growth experienced in the 1990s. With the mineral accounts decreasing, the

stakeholders who benefit from the sector are facing substantial challenges. This includes companies, employees, and the government, who benefit from the sector. This is reflected by the unstable contribution of the mining industry on the country's GDP (Khlif, Guidara, and Souissi, 2015). Similar to the agricultural sector, the mining industry is a primary sector that contributes resources required by other economic sectors. Resultantly, the mining industry impacts on employment and economic performance directly and indirectly. This implies that the success of the mining industry is directly linked to success in other sectors that rely on the products (Harrison and Zack, 2012).

The mining industry is subject to various factors, including global economic trends. The 2008 and 2009 financial crisis had a substantial impact on the mining sector, leading to high job losses in the sector. It also affected the profitability of the sector, and it has taken long for the companies and related sectors to recover nationally and from a global perspective. Despite the substantial potential of the mining industry, its contribution to the total employment opportunities in the country is substantially low (Harrison and Zack, 2012). Nevertheless, there have been significant improvements in the sector since the end of apartheid. These changes are largely evident in the improvement of the worker's rights and increased focus in addressing health and safety issues. These achievements have been made with the engagement of labour unions such as NUM, which have influenced how different stakeholders engage in the business. Despite the widespread efforts, there are inherent issues linked to housing and wages, which are exemplified by the emergence of shanty towns and industrial actions in demand for higher wages. The organisations involved in the mining industry continue to subcontract workers, which leads to lower compensations and reduced efficiency of labour unions in addressing their needs (Naumann and Greiner, 2017). Further challenges in the mining sector are highlighted by the recent incidents in Marikana and the strike in Rustenburg, which shows that there are shortcomings in the bargaining system between the stakeholders in the sector. Notably, the emergence of the AMCU has increased the politics that exist in the sector, which has attracted violence.

Labour Relations

According to Moeti-Lysson and Ongori (2011), trade unions, commonly known as labour unions, are defined as any group of workers who have united for the purpose of regulating their relationship with employers. This means that the purpose of labour unions includes representing the interests of workers and ensuring that agreements and awards between employers and workers are attained. As articulated by Hyman (1975), more fundamental functions of labour unions include the rebuilding of the social order, moderating the dominating role of profit maximisation, the institutionalisation of the workers' control, championing for better working conditions, and the abolishment of inequalities when it comes to standards of living and living conditions. Generally, collective bargaining with a firm's management is one of the activities undertaken by labour unions to solve individual and collective grievances aired by workers. As pointed out by Armstrong (2006), collective bargaining arrangements are achieved through an agreement between the elected representatives of trade unions and firms' management, employer negotiating agencies and/or employers' associations to ascertain particular terms and conditions of employment for a given collection of employees. Such processes are essentially governed by procedural agreements and in most cases, lead to substantive agreements as well as agreed upon worker-employer relations (Hill and Maroun, 2015).

Over the years, labour unions have recorded success in fighting for workers' rights, including equal and better pay. This has been achieved through different mechanisms such as litigation, although it is generally agreed that collective legal action may take longer than necessary (Conley, 2014). A survey conducted by Paraskevopoulos and McKay (2016) on the functions of labour as agents of change revealed that labour unions serve as machinery for fighting inequalities amongst workers. One of the common impacts of labour unions lies in their ability to raise wages to levels above competitive margins (Kahn, 1968). As a result, firms are forced to use most of their revenues to pay workers. Holding everything else constant, this can have a negative impact on the profitability of firms unless they find ways to transfer the costs to consumers, due to the need of meeting the stakeholder interests (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart and Wright, 2017). However, labour unions have been reported as beneficial to firms' performance and

profitability in terms of reducing employee absenteeism and turnover (Doucouliagos, and Laroche, 2009). This makes theoretical predictions regarding the impact of labour unions on firm performance ambiguous. Nevertheless, empirical evidence demonstrates a negative impact of labour unions on performance and overall profitability of firms (Metcalf, 2003; Doucouliagos and Laroche, 2009; Lee and Mas, 2009). This stems from the fact that labour unions can afford to extort a union wage premium for its members, while to the involved firms, the effect on profitability and overall performance tend to be zero or even negative (Hirsch, 2003). Although regulations and governance of labour unions tend to be country-specific, these studies provide a blueprint of the impact labour unions are likely to have on South Africa's mining industry. Even though there is no study that has been undertaken to explore the impact of labour unions on the mining industry in South Africa, it can be deduced that the recent workers' strikes in South Africa are in one way or another associated with unionization of workers like in other countries (Gereffi and Lee, 2016). One of the ideologies embraced in this study is that union collective bargaining will have a negative impact on the performance of firms in the mining industry in South Africa.

Labourers play a critical role in the mining sector, considering that most of the processes are not substantially mechanised. Over the years, the number of employees in the mining sector has been increasing, but other factors such as wage and benefits have been limited, especially to the labourers (Yakovleva, Kotilainen, and Toivakka, 2017). The increasing economic challenges, coupled with a high cost of living, have influenced increased demands among the workers. This has resulted in numerous strikes, which have increased focus on the sector by the government and businesses. Additionally, the strikes are increasingly attracting research works due to the impact they have on business and the economy as well as the critical aspects of how employees engage with employers, unions, and the government. Workplace conflicts have emerged as a critical factor influencing the productivity and engagement of the employees in the mining sector (Martinez-Alier, 2001). This can be attributed to the membership of employees in different unions, which represent different interests for the workers. The on-and-off strikes among the mineworkers have been detrimental to the role of unions representing their demands and addressing the differences that result in workplace conflicts. The high levels of violence experienced during the strikes have also put the reputation of the labour unions under scrutiny. Due to lack of effectiveness in addressing employee demands due to compromised bargaining capacity and inter-union competition, the strikes experienced in the sector last for long, which compromises the outcome of the industry to the economy and limits the capacity of the employees to meet individual needs. Resultantly, labour relations in the mining industry are substantially compromised, and there is an increased need to achieve efficiency in how employee needs are addressed through collective bargaining.

Strikes in the mining sector are characterised by their length, frequency, and violent nature. These factors have compromised the capacity of the organisations to deliver effectively and achieve employee satisfaction (Humby, 2016). The losses incurred during the strikes limit the capacity of the company to address the inherent needs of the workforce. Furthermore, the recent experiences that include the involvement of government forces have impacted on the relationships among the workers and the employers. The lack of trust between the two parties has increased the need for the labour unions. Nevertheless, their participation in mending the relationships in the industry has not been substantially effective (Jordaan, 2016). The strikes also have a national impact on the economy, which affects the export volumes and reduces productivity in related sectors (Seekings, 2004). Consequently, the labour relations in the sector have impacted on the general economic aspects and limited the intent of both domestic and foreign investors to engage in the mining sector. The cause of the strikes varies among workers and unions, which increases the challenge in addressing the issues that have compromised productivity in the sector (Harvey, 2016.) Nevertheless, there is a consensus among researchers that inequalities in how workers are compensated impacts on the perceptions and attitudes that exist among the people. Additionally, workers in the mining sector are young, well educated, but are offered low-skilled jobs. In this context, the companies have failed in strategic human resource management, which has affected the effectiveness of how employees are engaged to maximise their potential in the workplace. The distrusted unions have increased the issues associated with workers in the mining sector because they have often failed to protect the workers from racial discrimination, abuse, exploitation, and other ills

caused by employers as identified by Wolpe (2018). The workers in the mining sector are considered to be better paid compared to people in other sectors such as education, which implies that the strikes are not usually due to low compensations, but the high levels of economic inequality that is experienced in SA and the industry (Cairncross and Kisting, 2016). From this perspective, the root cause of poor labour relations in the mining sector can be attributed to the failure of the effective transformation of the apartheid workplace. This has influenced a situation where even the well-paid workers in the formal sector seek improved conditions, which in some cases is expressed as the demand for increased pay. Accelerating economic growth in the country requires increased support for improved labour relations in the mining sector. This requires a strategic approach that involves engagement of labour unions, mining companies, workers, and the government. There are different types of strikes experienced in the SA mining sector. Economic strikes occur in situations where the mining industries and the workforce fail to resolve issues associated with wages or benefits offered by the companies. Unfair labour practises strikes emerge when the workers protest the employer's illegal activities such as the lack of providing a healthy and safe working environment. Recognition strikes are experienced when the employees push employers to recognise the unions that advocate for their rights and interests. The reinstatement of employees after a strike is influenced by the type of strike they engage in and the reasons that influence the strike. Notably, employers have the mandate to seek replacement workers when strikes lack legal bases.

Economic and Policy Factors That Affect Trade Unions in the Mining

Since the 1980s and 1990s, trade/labour unions in Africa have been facing substantial challenges in their quest to address issues that emerge in the workplace. These issues are largely related to the rights of the weak, poor, and vulnerable people in the society that are most likely to be exploited by employers (Eweje, 2009). In many countries, including SA, the effectiveness of trade unions remains substantially low, and union membership is reducing, following increased informal approaches in engaging people at the workplace and a casual approach to the management of labour (Bond and Mottiar, 2013). Notably, the lack of effectiveness in union operations has led to a phenomenon where the loyalty and enthusiasm linked to such organisations is increasingly diminishing among members. The decreasing influence of unions in matters that impact on members and workers can be attributed to the economic and policy strategies that compromise their role. With complex and difficult economic conditions experienced in Sub-Saharan Africa, SA labour unions are subject to various factors that impact on their finances, leadership, decision-making, and the influence they have on members (Seekings, 2004). Consequently, with limited finances, internal wrangles, inter-union conflicts, and diminishing membership, the unions operating in the SA mining sector have faced numerous challenges in offering tangible services and benefits to the mineworkers (Martinez-Alier, 2001).

From the South African perspective, the implementation of the IMF/World Bank-sponsored Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP) coupled with the Poverty Reduction Strategies Policies (PRSP) by governments across the globe has influenced reduced membership in labour unions. This is linked to the measures taken by governments under these policies to improve the quality of life among citizens, which has presented a situation where there is duplication of responsibilities between the government and the unions. In the recent past, there has been increased privatisation of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and retrenchment of large numbers of people working in the public sector (Kanyane and Sausi, 2015). This has substantially reduced the membership in various labour unions, while the high levels of unemployment reduce the opportunities for new members to contribute to the unions. Additionally, the private sector, which in many countries employs a large number of people, has to successfully generate enough opportunities to address unemployment (Gumede, 2016). Arguably, like many countries in Africa, membership in labour unions in SA has stagnated as the government offers alternative strategies to lobby for the worker's rights coupled with the high number of unemployment in the country (Bohlmann, Heerden, Dixon, and Rimmer, 2015).

The labour unions in SA have for long had a substantial impact on the political scene in the country. Despite this, the changing political environment has reduced their impact on the national trends, which implies that their capacity to protect and improve the working and living conditions of the members is

substantially limited. The phenomenon can be attributed to the shift among the political class to creating capital alliances due to the increasing costs of conducting politics (Robinson, 2002). Additionally, the worker's needs are overshadowed by profit motives, which has resulted in increased support for companies and capitalists by the political class compared to the focus on the workers' needs (Trimikliniotis, Gordon and Zondo, 2008). This is reflected in the reforms experienced in national laws, which are focused on securing capital and profit at the expense of the workers and communities. These changes have compromised the role of a labour union in the collective bargaining process, especially in situations where legal reforms have been formulated to protect employers and key stakeholders in the business. In SA, labour unions that were traditionally associated with the Black people are increasingly losing their vigour due to their stubborn alliance with the African National Congress (ANC), which is substantially losing power. Nevertheless, labour unions are not oblivious to the changes affecting their operations. This has resulted in adoption as a strategic process that is focused on addressing the challenges (Webster and Buhlungu, 2004). This includes the introduction of various benefits for the members that are beyond the collective bargaining frameworks. These undertakings are in response to the changing economic conditions, legal reforms, and the need to retain and attract new members.

The dwindling finances and influence among the trade/labour unions have changed the fortunes linked to trade unions across Africa, with the adoption of the economic and social policy environment. International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and Western governments that influence the investment trends in the continent have advocated and compelled African governments to implement market-driven policies (Roberts, 2015). Such policies include the trade liberalisation policies, privatisation of SOEs, and deregulation of the labour market and financial sectors (Kabundi, Schaling and Some, 2015). With such strategies put in place, SA has developed to become that most economically advanced nation in Sub-Saharan Africa (Eweje, 2009). The economy is diversified and has become substantially industrialised and plays an important role in the global economy. South Africa has put Africa in the global capitalism context, due to the potential of sectors such as mining (Kabundi, Schaling, and Some, 2015). In this context, trade unions have become an imperative aspect of how workers in SA engage in economic advancement and raising the comparative advantage experienced by the country. Policies adopted in the country have shaped how the workforce and labour unions in the mining industry engage in contributing to development. The SA government has adopted neoliberal macroeconomic policies that are premised on the Growth Employment and Redistribution policy (GEAR). Through this policy approach, the government has fostered a market-driven and export competitive approach in developing an environment that can foster effective enhanced employee and organisational productivity, with the effective participation of trade unions to foster cooperation in growth and development initiatives. The adoption of GEAR was largely perceived as a self-imposed structural adjustment strategy. The policy entailed the marketisation of the education sector, increased public-private partnerships, fiscal austerity, addressing budgetary constraints, cost-containment, and cuts in education.

The changes influenced by GEAR resulted in the liberalisation of the SA economy, which led to increased investment by foreign businesses, increasing competition for the domestic businesses. In this context, the impact on labour unions can be linked to the elimination of the protection from global economic forces, which was previously enjoyed by the labour market through government policies and sanctions. Drawing from this perspective, the increased liberalisation coupled with democratisation of the economy has affected how unions operate and manage their responsibilities in SA (Kabundi, Schaling, and Some, 2015). Despite the underlying challenges and dwindling influence in policy changes and delivery of the members' needs, the SA labour unions are perceived to have a substantial impact, and the adoption of new strategies offers an opportunity for improvement. Despite this, the lack of strong policies to shape how unions and their members engage in advocacy has resulted in undesirable undertakings such as illegal strikes and conflicts between unions and members.

According to Luzipho (2014), the labour unions engaged in the SA mining sectors are subsidiaries of national labour unions that operate nationally and serve members from different economic sectors. The key unions involved in the mining sector include NUM, AMCU, Solidarity, Chambers of Mines, and South African Mining Development Association (SAMDA). These organisations are largely focused on

addressing the challenges and opportunities that emerge in the mining industry. The AMCU has in the recent past been dealing with issues concerning inequality, poverty, and unemployment, considering the developments and discoveries made in the mining industry. Other issues include the lack of community and social development among the mining communities, which is a result of lack of effective implementation of social and labour plans and poor transformation of the in the mining industry (Luzipho, 2014). Similarly, Solidarity has been advocating for the increased compliance with social and labour plans for increased efficiency in meeting the employee and community interests. NUM has also spearheaded efforts for the social and labour plans through effective decision-making and financial support in the transformation of the industry. The Chamber of Mines alludes that considering that the mining industry is labour and capital intensive, achieving effectiveness requires a government-industry partnership that facilitates collaboration in addressing challenges in the sector. SAMDA lobbies for the development of a vibrant and sustainable mining sector by focusing on the needs of disadvantaged South Africans (Luzipho, 2014). Drawing from the objectives of these unions, their focus is not only premised on the employee interests but also the prosperity and sustainability of the SA mining sector (Minerals Council South Africa, 2019).

The employment policies in the country have influenced how trade unions engage with the workforce and employers. Since 1996, the constitution of SA has presented three historic principles that impact on employment laws in the country. These principles are premised on the need for achieving equality among the people based on non-racial, non-sexist, and open-minded approaches in employment (Paraskevopoulou and McKay, 2016). There has been substantial development in employment policies with influence from national needs and influence from the international community. Despite this, the mining sector in the country still faces employment challenges, which trade unions in the industry attempt to address. These challenges in the sector are not only linked to the economy and policies adopted, but also the employee relations and resistance to change that has a limited transformation of the sector. In this light, policies have been employed in improving employee-company relationships, while the unions have ensured that this leads to a mutually beneficial relationship between the parties (Makhubedu, Nwobodo-Anyadiegwu, and Mbohwa, 2017). The major legal provisions that have been implemented in SA include the Labour Relations Act (LRA), Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA), Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (COIDA), Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), and Employment Equity Act (EEA). These employment regulations have been imperative in how mining companies engage workers as well as how labour unions identify and advocate for workers in the sector. Another important legal provision in the country is the Basic Condition of Employment Act No.75, which was enacted in 1997. This Act applies to all workers and employers in the country, and it highlights the basic conditions that are necessary for developing binding contracts between employers and employees. The provisions include compelling the employers to offer detailed employment contracts that include the working hours, conditions for overtime, compressed workweek, working hours, rest intervals, night shifts, public holidays, and compensation (Fourie, 2018). Similarly, the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act No. 61 of 1997 (COIDA) informs about how workers who sustain injuries, contract illnesses, or become disabled in the line of duty should be compensated. The Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998 (EEA) highlights the creation of equal opportunities for all people and eliminating any form of discrimination, including the historical imbalances that have existed in the country. Based on the EEA, the law requires employers, workers, and labour unions to engage in discussing issues related to salaries, wage negotiations, working conditions, and other challenges that emerge in the workplace. With the prevailing challenges in employment in the working sector, it is evident that these and other relevant legal provisions implemented in SA have not been effective in facilitating the role of labour unions in SA (McKenzie, 2017). Suggestively, relevant amendments are necessary to align the policies with the challenges currently being faced in the mining sector.

According to the Labour Research Service (2018), labour unions in the South Africa mining industry achieve their objectives primarily through collective bargaining. In this context, collective bargaining is used for issues associated with wages, working conditions, union rights, maternity, and paternity, among other important interests associated with the mine workers. The types of collective bargaining used by the

labour unions include mediation, arbitration, strikes, and lock-out actions (Labour Research Search Service, 2018). The collective agreements established in the collective bargaining process binds the parties involved for a particular period. This implies that collective bargaining is an ongoing process that helps to address the emergent challenges in the workforce. In the SA context, the unions play an important role in the collective bargaining process by negotiating for the members' interest with the employer. A unique aspect of the organisers in the SA mining industry involved in facilitating the collective bargaining process is that they lack the voting rights during decision-making, despite them being full-time union workers who are trained to represent the workers. This is due to the fact they are not elected by a specific group of workers, but rather are appointed or delegated by the unions to organise the collective bargaining processes. The Labour Research Service (2018) notes that there is a power struggle in the negotiations in the collective bargaining, considering that the individuals representing the workers put pressure on companies to agree to their demands, while the management uses various means and tactics to get the workforce to agree to the offers made. Where there are no agreements made, third parties are called to mediate or arbitrate for effective solutions to be established. Nevertheless, in some instances, the failure in negotiations can lead to industrial actions such as strikes or lock-out. The collective bargaining between unions and employers in the mining sector can take place at various level. The popular approaches of collective bargaining include:

Centralised Bargaining Level

This is achieved through centralised bargaining forums that enable the unions to negotiate with companies in the sector. Most of these negotiations are guided by the bargaining council that includes the Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC) and the Private Security Industry Bargaining Council (PSIBC). The Bargaining councils also engage in the enforcement of the collective agreements, addressing labour disputes, developing implementation strategies, and developing proposals that can be considered in the formulation of labour policies and laws (Labour Research Search Service, 2018).

Company Level

These are the negotiations conducted at the company level, whereby stewards are elected and engaged in negotiating for employee interests and rights.

Theoretical Framework

This research is based on the standard economic theory, also referred to as the expected theory. The theory was developed by Gabriel Carner (1728) and Daniel Bernoulli, and later on expounded by Oskar Morgenstern and John von Neumann (Kontogiannis, Koutsoupias and Spirakis, 2010). This theory argues that human beings are naturally self-centred, and they always seek pleasure and avoid suffering through protecting themselves against any possible risks. Moreover, human beings are rational beings, and in all their decision-making processes, they always opt for optimisation because they are faced with resource constraint (Meier, 2006). The standard economic theory focuses on economics as a system of seeking profits, which entails maximising the advantages acquired by an individual. Nevertheless, economic activities such as mining are premised on the mutual advantage that emerges from the business. In this case, the workers offer labour in the mining and marketing process, which is compensated through the profits made by the companies when the minerals are sold. The engagement of trade unions offers an opportunity for the focus on the advantages that should be enjoyed by the workers due to the lack of an accurate economic model that fosters fairness in compensation. Through the application of the standard economic theory in this research, the individual benefits of the workers and companies can be maximised through a focus on mutual benefits that can be influenced by the engagement of the trade unions.

As pinpointed by the standard economic theory, the main aim of the existence of labour unions is to fight for the welfare of employees and to ensure they get better pay and improved working conditions. There is a consensus among researchers that trade/labour unions are established with the intent of offering numerous workers an opportunity for collective bargaining. They create an opportunity for effective communication of employee needs, such as a conducive working environment and improved wages. This

is achieved by combining the interests of the members and using strategies that pressure the employer to meet the employee needs. Subsequently, the unions attempt to achieve a balance of power between the workers and employers. The advantage presented by the trade unions for the workers is the capacity to achieve a legal monopoly in the labour market for a particular organisation or industry. The monopoly achieved is effective in compelling the industry or firms to improve the wages and working conditions to competitive levels. From this perspective, the standard economic theory implies that unions promote employee retention and overall performance of a firm. However, labour unions pressurise organisations to pay higher wages and salaries, increasing the firm's cost of operation. Resultantly, labour unions are important for workers, but they are also organised monopolies that are lethal to the success and productivity of the organisation by raising the cost of operation (Freeman and Medoff 1984). At the same time, the labour unions have different perspectives, which implies there are varying objectives when engaging in negotiations and other activities to advocate for employee rights. The differences between the labour union objectives limit their capacity to perform effectively due to conflict of interests. For instance, while some are focused on equality at the workplace, others are focused on increasing wages and better living conditions. Although the objectives ultimately result in equality, the strategies and terms used by different unions vary substantially. Additionally, the political affiliation of different trade unions highlights the differences that exist among the stakeholders. In this light, the needs and interests of union members are influenced by political objectives, which increase are premised on the socio-cultural differences. Such factors limit the levels of cooperation among cooperation in advocating for employee needs. By using the stand economic theory, there is an opportunity to set common ground on how the different needs of union members across South Africa can be addressed in the mining industry leading to prosperity of the companies and the workers.

Summary

This section offers a critical review of literature that focuses on important aspects of how labour unions operate in relation to the mining industry and the legal structures of South Africa. This section offers insights about labour relations in the country by highlighting the key roles of different stakeholders in how trade unions engage with companies in the mining sector. It also shows the economic and policy factors that have an impact on trade unions. In this context, the role of the government in facilitating the engagement of trade unions is revealed through the legal structures. The section also offers the theoretical framework that guides the investigation. In this context, the research is premised on the standard economic theory, which shows that people are self-centred and try to protect themselves from any risks. This is reflected by the struggle of labour unions to advocate for the best interests of the workforce in issues that might compromise their livelihood.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Philosophy

According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thronhill (2016), the research philosophy is an important aspect to consider when developing new knowledge because it offers the basis on which the study engages in research and the various considerations and assumptions made in the process. In this context, Saunders, Lewis, and Thronhill (2016) allude that the research philosophy is concerned with the sources, nature, and improvement of knowledge. Drawing from an array of reviews, research philosophy can be perceived to be the ideologies held by the researcher concerning the approaches that can be implemented to gather data about a particular phenomenon and how the data can be utilised to develop new knowledge. The intent of this research is to engage people in the mining sector to understand how the labour unions impact on the mining industry. Suggestively, developing new insights requires understanding the experiences of individuals in the mining industry to understand how the labour unions impact on the sector. Resultantly, studying the phenomenon was premised on the interpretivism research philosophy. Although there are various research philosophies that could be employed in the study, the characteristics of the interpretivist approach emerged as the most effective approach to guide data collection and analysis. According to

Saunders, Lewis, and Thronhill (2016), interpretivism alludes to the epistemological assumptions that highlight there is a need for the researcher to understand the differences between people and their role as social actors. This implies that there is a difference in researching humans compared to other objects. This concept of social actors is important because it alludes to the contributions people make in how they interact with other people and the environment. Subsequently, interpretivism facilitates a research approach that draws from the everyday social roles of people involved in the study based on the meaning associated with such roles. It also facilitates the interpretation of the social roles played by other people based on the meaning we draw from our settings.

The interpretivism research philosophy is premised on their intellectual ideologies of phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, and hermeneutics. This increases the diversity in how interpretivism guides research (Antwi and Hamza, 2015). Drawing from the phenomenology concept of interpretivism, the researcher focuses on how people comprehend their surroundings. It is critical for this study to establish how labour unions impact the mining industry. Due to the emphasis on the experiences of the people in the mining sector, the interpretivism approach emphasises on the use of qualitative research methods over quantitative approaches in data collection and analysis. These approaches are critical for the researcher to engage social actors and acknowledge the differences that exist among people. Following the interpretivism approach can result in biases, considering the data collected is affected by individual perspectives and values. This highlights the need to ensure that the study is conducted based on the research objectives and issues of trustworthiness are addressed appropriately. Additionally, it requires the researcher to guarantee the reliability of the data gathered. The interpretivist approach fits appropriately in conducting this research to guarantee the credibility and reliability of the research findings (Mills, Harrison, Franklin, and Birks, 2017).

Research Method

The interpretivist research philosophy advocates for the application of qualitative research methods. Qualitative research facilitates a focus on various aspects that influence the experiences of the people. The application of qualitative approach ensures that the research can focus on factors that are difficult to quantify, which is an important factor in exploring the impact of labour unions on firms operating in the South African mining industry. The qualitative research methods refer to a type of social action that provides a detailed explanation of the manner in which individuals interpret and derive sense out of their experiences, with the aim of gaining insight into a phenomenon. Qualitative research utilises data collection approaches, such as the use of secondary data and surveys using open-ended questionnaires and interviews (Mohajan, 2018). Due to the complexity in gathering data from a large population, high capital requirements to engage the target population, and time constraints, the research employed a qualitative secondary research approach. The secondary research entails drawing insights from an array of textual data and conducting textual analysis. This includes focusing on policy documents, media, newsletters, firm statements and balance sheets, case studies, journals, and other relevant and credible sources of information. These texts were obtained from the internet as well as organisations' reports and library sources. Key terms were used to search for case studies, policy documents, and case studies. The key terms include mining policies in SA, labour union policies in SA, and employee rights in SA, among others. The use of secondary sources of data was premised on insights presented by Schudson (2002), who alludes that "National news publications and broadcasting agencies are important media channels used regularly by various groups and opinion leaders to express their opinions on current affairs and political issues."

Research Design

Exploring the impact of labour unions in the SA mining sector requires a focus on an array of aspects emerging from the workforce, companies, the government, and the legal structures. To achieve this, the research adopted the exploratory research approach, which facilitated the integration of insights emerging from different contexts in the issue under research as presented by various authors. The exploratory research design aims at exploring and gaining insight into the impact of labour unions in the SA mining

sector by facilitating in-depth investigations in data collection and analysis (Shukla, 2008). Reviews show that exploratory studies can be conducted for various purposes, including building on the knowledge of a phenomenon or topic that is not well understood and thus, it is crucial to understand it better and also to develop more contemporary hypotheses concerning a topic that is already well understood (Swedberg, 2018). Various studies have attempted to investigate the role and impact of labour unions in SA, but the topic has not been substantially analysed. Subsequently, the application of this research in this study contributes substantially to the existing knowledge by addressing the research gaps and drawing new insights from the experiences of people currently engaged in the mining sector by integrating the knowledge that is currently available from various sources. The exploratory research design facilitates the collection of secondary data by exploring various sources, their content, and context based on the research objectives (Shukla, 2008).

Inclusion Criteria of Secondary Sources

The inclusion criteria allude to a set of predetermined characteristics that can be employed to identify the relevant sources of information that can be used in the research. The inclusion criteria coupled with the exclusion criteria offer a strategy for selection or eligibility criteria that rules out the irrelevant sources and facilitates the use of sources that can contribute substantially and appropriately to the issue under research. Saunders, Lewis, and Thronhill (2016) implies that the inclusion criteria is imperative in secondary research to facilitate the achievement of scientific objectives set in the study. The proper selection of sources is critical to this study to ensure that the research focuses on the objectives and to optimise on the validity of the research as well as address the ethical concerns upheld in the study. It is also inherent to the quality of findings and conclusions made in the research. Further insights show that the inclusion and exclusion criteria set the boundary for achieving a critical review based on the objectives and research questions. There are various factors to consider in the inclusion and exclusion criteria based on the interests of the researcher. Fundamentally, the sources used in secondary research should be credible and academic to justify the findings made. Drawing from these insights, the following factors were considered in selecting the secondary sources used in this research:

Date

The research draws from the historical development of the labour unions and the mining organisations. Resultantly, the research focused on all sources that offered historical insights since the 20th century to the 21st century.

Exposure of Interest

The research focused on sources that engaged individuals that offered primary data based on their experiences with issues under study.

Geographic Location

The sources used in the research were largely those that offered relevant insights about SA mining companies and labour organisations. Nevertheless, the research also draws from sources that offer relevant information about trade unions in Africa and issues concerning the workforce in the mining sector across the globe. This is premised on the assumption that trade unions in Africa face similar challenges and experiences, and employees in the mining sector are subject to the same working conditions.

Peer Review

The research incorporated studies that have been peer-reviewed to ensure that they were credible and offered insights that were legitimate and appropriate for the study.

Reported Outcomes

In this context, the research focused on research findings that were relevant and scientific based on the SA context of labour unions and the mining sector.

Study Design

The research took priority on studies and reports that had a scientific base on the study design to ensure that studies and reports were credible and reliable in the research.

Type of Publication

This was important to ensure the credibility of the sources used. The research drew insights from legit and credible sources that include news reports from credible sources, journals and research papers, books, credible websites, and corporate and government reports.

Data Collection

Data collection has to be effective for any research to be representative and draw insights that accurately address the research objectives and research questions. In this research, secondary sources of data were utilized to investigate and develop a comprehensive conclusion based on the research objectives and research questions. It is entailed searching and selecting sources based on the inclusion criteria, with a key focus on the credibility of the sources and the quality and relevance of the sources to the research questions and objectives. The key terms were used to gather an array of sources from different platforms online and offline. This was accomplished through the internet and library searches to gather relevant documents, including books, journals, news reports, and other relevant materials from credible sources. The keywords identified in this methodology offered guidance to what was necessary for the study, coupled with seeking the credibility of the authors and sources of the data. The information gathered was triangulated to develop themes that relate to insights emerging from the secondary data.

Data Analysis

Critical sources of data in the study were secondary research data sources that were used in the literature review as well as any other relevant sources of information that met the inclusion criteria based on various aspects related to the mining sector and the labour unions. The intent of the data analysis was to develop a comprehensive account from the data collected on the impact labour unions have on the mining industry in SA. In this light, the data analysis entailed the triangulation of data sources, which was accomplished through a thematic analysis of the information gathered in the research. This was accomplished through textual analyses of the different secondary sources of data. This approach helped in providing an in-depth understanding of the issues under research based on the information emerging from literature sources. The textual analysis established the key themes that emerge in different studies and the trends associated with the interaction of labour unions and the mining sector. Content analysis was employed to analyse the content emerging from the reports and studies. This approach was inherent in ensuring that the major concepts relevant to the research were captured and the irrelevant information was discarded (Vitouladiti, 2014). The content was analysed strategically, indicating the themes and patterns in the data collected based on the research objectives and questions. The relationship between the different themes was determined by triangulating the information gathered the textual and content analysis of secondary data to make an appropriate conclusion.

The use of content and textual analysis facilitated the thematic analysis that captures the concepts of the issue under research in a qualitative nature. The thematic analysis ensured that only data and concepts linked to the research objectives and questions were included in the research. The triangulation of the approaches used in research analysis prevented biases that emerged in the data gathered in certain studies or reports and increased the credibility of this research about other studies that have focused on similar issues.

This research relies on secondary data because it was difficult to gather primary data from a large number of stakeholders that can inform the study. This includes the integration of insights from the mining companies, the labour unions, members of labour unions, and the government. This would require

substantial time to cover the target population. This was limited by time and financial constraints. Additionally, the data gathered in such research would be substantially large, which implies the need for sophisticated strategies to analyse it. Also, data saturation would compromise the quality of the research. Nevertheless, the secondary research offered substantial and reliable insights to achieve the research objectives.

Ethical Considerations

As stated by Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008), research is vulnerable to fraud, wrongdoing, and lies, and thus, ethical considerations are crucial in this study. Additionally, researchers and other stakeholders, including governments, have highlighted the need to uphold ethical considerations in studies that involve government agencies, organizations, as well as human subjects. This research involved drawing insights from different sources that involved people working in different organizations. Subsequently, ethical considerations were inherent in how the information available was used in the study. This was achieved by ensuring that the research proposal was approved by all relevant parties in the University and the citations and references of the sources were offered. Additionally, the research ensured that there was a clear and accurate interpretation of the information available based on the actual findings or reports made by specific authors.

Limitations

The research about trade unions in South Africa and their impact on the mining industry is one that requires extensive research and detailed data collection, which might not have been achieved in this research. To address this, the researcher focused on gathering data from a substantial number of sources based on their knowledge and experience and according to the information necessary to meet the research objectives and respond to the research questions. A substantial number of sources were used to inform the research, which contributes to the quality and credibility of the conclusions drawn by the researcher. Nevertheless, it is arguable that the number of secondary data sources available for this research was not enough to offer an accurate interpretation of the impact the labour union has on the mining industry, which justifies follow-up research that can facilitate the gathering of primary data from respondents that have knowledge and experience on the issues under research.

Summary

This section offers insights about the approach used to develop knowledge in this research. The study was accomplished through a qualitative research method that focused on literature reviews as the source of data. The use of secondary research facilitated gathering insights from an array of sources that were critically reviewed. Primary research was not accomplished in the study due to time and financial constraints necessary to engage different stakeholders who contribute to the impact of labour unions in the mining industry.

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

Numerous sources that include news, corporate, and government reports, as well as several studies, show that labour unions have a critical contribution to the activities and changes experienced in the mining sector. Based on the objective of this study, the impact of labour unions in the mining sector is evident in different contexts that emerge in how the workforce engages with the trade unions. Drawing from these insights, there are patterns that emerge in the sources, which highlights the themes linked to the research objectives.

The Role of Labour Unions in Addressing the Issue of Workers Welfare in the Mining Sector

Reports show that the major trade unions that function in the SA mining sector include COSATU, FEDUSA, and NACTU. An array of researchers has engaged representatives from these organisations to understand the implications the trade unions have on the mining industry. Drawing from the history of the

labour unions in the country, the three organisations are closely linked and have a substantial contribution to the struggle against apartheid. There are some key factors that influence the organisational culture of the labour unions. For COSATU, reviews suggested that it fosters unity in a multi-racial work environment. FEDUSA emerged as an organisation that fosters transformation in the workplace despite being traditionally associated with white trade unions, while NACTU is also a transformative organisation, although it has traditionally focused on black workers (Bhorat, 2000). Drawing from this perspective, the labour unions are increasingly transforming the workplace in an inclusive manner that engages all people without discrimination on a racial basis. Further reviews show that there is a consensus among researchers that show workers in the country are substantially unionised, and the organisations play a critical role in how people engage with the businesses (Nattrass, 2002). Additionally, the reviews imply that the role of the labour unions is primarily guaranteeing the welfare of the workers through strategic approaches that link the employees' interest with those of the company in a legal approach supported by the government and the law.

Accounts from the mining firms and labour unions show a consensus that accountability in the relationship between workers, unions, and the companies is inherent to success. In this context, the study shows that labour unions need accountability to guarantee that their objectives are achieved effectively. According to Nattrass and Seekings (1997), the union is given shape and meaning by their capacity to service the grievances that emerge among the workers and offering relevant information about how different issues should be addressed. The role and benefits that emerge from the trade unions are linked to the effectiveness of the organisation to engage workers, push for their interests, and offer support in meeting personal goals that are influenced by organisational objectives. Researchers show that the union representatives within the mining firms have a critical role in ensuring that the desires of the workforce are achieved through the role played by labour unions and the subsequent action taken by the mining companies (Schultz and Mwabu, 1998). In this light, leadership among workers is a critical factor in how they are engaged with the unions as well as the effectiveness in responsive actions that are designed to their needs. The leaders in the organisational setting offer the link between the workforce and the unions, which facilitates the flow of information in a multidirectional way. Suggestively, among the fundamental roles of labour unions is to foster communication channels and place individuals in positions that facilitate engagement of all respondents in union activities that guarantee employee welfare. Researchers stress that when the stewards that link workers to the unions are responsive, the role of unions in advancing the employee interests is strategically achieved (Cumbers, Nativel, and Routledge, 2008, Heery and Abbott, 2000). Fundamentally, reviews from the three major labour unions show that electing stewards is critical to the success of labour unions and in representing their needs. Notably, in situations where the stewards are appointed by the unions or mining firm managers, there is a high probability of substantial resistance that can compromise the achievement of the set objectives.

Further reviews show that stewards influence the effectiveness of the union in delivering services to the workers (Heery, 2009). Additionally, managers in the mining sector show that the stewards leading the workers are an important link in determining how the companies respond to the employee needs and interests. Reviews add that stewards are more likely to do what the members tell them, which is a critical aspect in achieving employee welfare objectives. This shows that their loyalty lies with the employees, which is central to how each within the organisation develops a positive attitude to the role played by the unions in their employment (Waddington and Whitston, 1997). The influence of the union at the workplace is premised on the discretion the stewards have in their mandate. From this perspective, researchers show that a broad mandate among the stewards leads to a stronger influence of the union on the workforce. Arguably, scholars imply that the effectiveness of the labour unions is premised on the ability of stewards in the mining firms to perform. The stewards can represent the employee's interests as they see fit to the employers and the unions. Nevertheless, it is critical to ensure that the issues represented are premised on the employee interests with their active participation and fair representation of all parties concerned (Doogan, 2001). The functions of the stewards within the mining organisations are often to act as delegates that engage in the labour union activities according to the direct mandate provided by the unions and the workers. Suggestively, the role of the stewards as custodians of the

workforce welfare is central to the conflicts that emerge between employers and the workers in the mining sector.

From another perspective, the labour unions contribute to the employees' welfare by operating on an open mandate, whereby they accommodate the interests of the workforce, the union, and the employer. This highlights the contrasting perceptions that exist among the stewards for the unions and representatives of the mining firms in addressing employee interests. Nevertheless, the highlights show that the loyalty of the stewards lies largely in employee interests, which are driven by the functions of the labour unions focused on achieving employee welfare (Rajak, 2016a). Despite this, research shows that in some cases, stewards act based on their interests, which compromises the interests of the employees and those of the company. Suggestively, the welfare of the workforce can be limited by the role played by their stewards and the subsequent actions taken by the labour unions. Focus on self-interests in advocating for the employee needs is among the factors that contribute to conflicts in the organisational setting because workers are misled by the interests of a few people or an individual. This highlights the notion held by managers in the mining firms that it is imperative for the stewards to actively consult with the employees and the workforce on important issues. This includes offering feedback on important issues, which ensures that the interests of the company and those of the workers are aligned, making it easier to achieve the welfare objectives.

How Labour Unions Are Constituted to Exercise Administrative Powers

Research shows that there are high levels of union advocacy that exist in how they engage in the workplace (Collinson, Tollman, Kahn, Clark, and Garenne, 2006). Studies focusing on the mining firm highlighted that internal democracy is a prevailing aspect within the companies that have fostered increased engagement of employees in labour union membership. Additionally, internal democracy has increased efficiency in how the workers select and interact with their stewards. In this context, the administrative powers of the labour unions have a substantial influence on the notion of democracy and the subsequent engagement of workers and their stewards.

Researchers link the high levels of internal democracy experienced in the modern-day mining firms to the increased capacity of individuals to engage in collective action. This is in line with the sentiments expressed by Hayter (2015) that imply the primary objective of unions is to engage in collective bargaining by setting a common goal for the members. This implies that being part of the union enables individuals to act in unity in advocating for their interests in the workplace. This is characterised by the flow and sharing of administrative power from the union to the workers (Rajak, 2016b). This gives the workforce the power of the union in their respective workers. In this light, being a member of a union gives workers the power to mobilise within the workplace. This reflects the ability of labour unions to pressure companies through employee actions.

The administrative power held by unions is compromised by the lack of a consensus on the actions that should be taken by the workforce in an unionised worker. This is reflected in the study by Hill and Maroun (2015), who show that when unions representing workers in the same organisation have different objectives, conflicts might emerge. Based on this argument, being part of a union is an important aspect of the success achieved in strategic engagement and liaisons with the employees. Drawing from these insights, the influence of the unions on the actions of employees is premised on the notion that the unity influenced by being members of a union is a source of power that increases their capacity to transform the workplace. The findings of studies in this context show that there is a positive impact of unions on employees, but there are some exceptions where the workers' power extended to them by the union can be misused (Hamann and Bertels, 2018). This is reflected in the contexts where mass action results in detrimental results for both the employers and workers in cases such as strikes. Furthermore, it also damages the reputation of the labour unions involved (Fine, 2018).

The stewards in the organisational setting were identified as the key players in how organisations exercise their power. Insights from the mining companies show that the impact the stewards have on the workforce is influenced by how they are put in the positions of power. In this context, electing the stewards is critical for their roles to be supported by the employee (Power et al., 2016). From another

perspective, stewards that are appointed are more likely to be distant to the workers, which limit the influence the unions or the employees have on the workers. Research by Humby (2016) argues that it is critical for the regular election of stewards to be conducted to ensure that the changing employee needs and behaviours were represented effectively and aligned to the prevailing needs of the workforce. Fundamentally, studies highlight that workers should have control of the power posed by the unions having the capacity to remove stewards who fail to represent them effectively.

Drawing from these insights, the impact of the unions in the sector is the increased need for advocacy in the workplace, which is led by stewards based on employee interests. The unions have also influenced the notion of democracy, where employees elect their stewards rather than rely on appointments made by the union or employer. This shows that there is a strategic approach in how employee issues are addressed in the organisational setting as well as in linking the organisational activities with those of the union (Marais et al., 2018). Additionally, the situations reflected by various studies show that companies need to facilitate effective communication across the organisation. This is to ensure that the workforce can engage effectively with their representatives. Furthermore, it is through access to information that power is developed and exercised in the organisational setting. Effective communication with the stewards and the management ensures that the employee needs and interests are known and updated reliably. Resultantly, there is reduced resistance and conflicts among workers in pursuing or pushing for their interests. Arguably, effective communication limits the adverse impacts that are associated with the union actions. From another perspective, the impact of labour unions in the workplace is reflected by the influence they have on fostering collective actions such as go-slows and industrial actions that are designed to meet employees' needs (Hill and Maroun, 2015).

Studies also show that being part of a union increases the opportunity of employees being part of community organisations, civil society groups, and other social movements that can foster success among workers (Hill and Maroun, 2015; Stewart and Nite, 2017). Most of the people in the mining organisations have the perception that stewards are not effective in engaging the mining firms even when the employee interests are most likely to improve. Suggestively, the capacity of the workforce to form alliances within the workplace, which is motivated by the leadership offered by the stewards increases the resistance to change within organisations. Although this highlights the influence of power, it is detrimental to the common objectives that might exist among the workers. Suggestively, being part of the union can contribute to the erosion of the organisational values that are inherent to the organisational performance. This argument has been raised by various managers in mining, who suggest that the workers and stewards are more interested in the issues raised by the union rather than what is important to the success of the company (Crankshaw, 2017). This makes the company subject to the interests and sometimes threats presented by the united workers as they exercise their power. From this context, the unions complicate the strategic engagement of the workforce in the organisational activities due to the influence they have on the workforce. Despite this, scholars show a consensus that the role of the union in identifying the limitations of the company that compromise employee performance, engagement, and satisfaction can contribute to improved organisational performance (Stewart and Nite, 2017). This is critical when the process is strategic and involves the input of all stakeholders. From the employee's perspective, there is a lack of substantial support from the social organisations that are influenced by being part of the unions, considering that the administrative powers of the union compromise the achievements made by a small group of people.

Negotiation Tactics Employed and Their Impact on Mining Companies

Another critique levelled against the labour unions by many researchers is that the strong link between the workers and the unions has emasculated the engagement of workers in organisations. This results in a situation whereby the contribution of workers at the workplace is determined by the unions rather than the organisation. Consequently, the workers have little contribution to the decision making within the organisation as their interests are driven by the labour union (Bhorat, 2000). Suggestively, the decisions made by the company are designed to take care of the interests presented by the unions, rather than addressing the issues that directly affect employee performance and contribute to the effective

formulation of reward systems and conducive work environments (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, and Wright, 2017). An array of researches shows that there is a consensus in the fact that management in the mining sector is under pressure from labour unions, especially in factors related to employment equity (Hofmeyr and Lucas, 2001). This is not only premised on the racial aspects but also compensation and reward systems. This also reflected by sentiments drawn from workers that highlight the disparity in the compensation between the workers and the management, which is often substantially higher, resulting in a demotivated workforce. Although the end of apartheid opened up opportunities for all people in the country engages in different positions in the mining sector, the attitudes and perceptions that exist among the people in the sector show that some unions are driven towards addressing the racial imbalance with little concern for the prevailing challenges (Moll, 1996). Suggestively, negotiation tactics and ideologies are compromised. Similarly, the managers in the mining sector alluded that unions are increasingly presenting misplaced priorities in addressing the issues emerging in the workplace. Despite this, Paraskevopoulou and McKay (2016) allude that there is a need for advocacy for equality in pay and good working conditions. This was countered by the ideology that increased pressure by the labour unions that resulted in various industrial actions such as strikes and go-slow impacts on the productivity and profitability of the organisation has a direct impact on the compensation and reward systems used by the mining companies.

Studies reveal that the positions of stewards within the company are perceived as the stepping stone into management positions, which are better paying (Moll, 1996; Stewart and Nite, 2017). Resultantly, unions shape the organisation structures by transferring their values to the companies through the stewards. This is achieved through the negotiation tactics employed by the unions. Nevertheless, this presumption seems misplaced due to the tension that exists between the stewards and the management, which implies that the negotiation tactics are not always aligned to the interests of the mining companies. Reviews suggest that once the individual representing the workers are offered management positions, they tend to focus more on the unions' objectives rather than what they advocated for when representing the workers. In such situations, there is also tension emerging among the people in management, and those left behind after promotions are made (Mwabu and Schultz, 2000). Arguably, the workers feel betrayed, which represents the failure of the unions in ensuring a balance between those in management and the workers. This is mostly prevalent when the issues of pay and work environment are not addressed effectively.

The insights emerging from various studies highlight that the gradual changes in the organisational structures and how mining companies engage the workforce to keep them productive and motivated has influenced how labour unions engage in the workplace through negotiations. According to insights from mining firms, the compensation strategies and reward systems used in the modern organisational settings are largely influenced by individual performance, which implies that workers who have substantial commitment and contribution in achieving organisational success are more likely to be highly compensated (Bhorat, 2000). Centrally, the unions seek to achieve equality in how people are compensated without taking consideration of what each has contributed to organisational success. In this context, workers alluded that sometimes, the advocacy conducted by the unions is misinformed, which results in actions that compromise the organisational operations (Bhorat, 2000). This is evident in how the union's advocacy for good working conditions and higher compensation for the workers is achieved through a collective bargaining approach that does not address the needs of the workforce in a personalised approach.

Based on the findings made in various studies, Rospabé (2002) shows that the unions can push for the needs of the workforce as a whole, but there is no guarantee that the personalised needs of the individuals are effectively addressed. On the contrary, the management in the mining firms shows that the performance evaluation strategies employed by the companies are more effective in meeting the employee needs compared to strategies that are enforced or influenced through the workers' unions. Taking these factors into consideration, the collective bargaining fostered by labour unions is increasingly becoming complex and more remote from the actual needs and interests of the workers (Katz-Lavigne, 2017). Consequently, the impact of the unions on the welfare and salaries is compromised by the

awkward questions that emerge due to the contrasting interests their influence within the company. Notably, this has resulted in internal struggles within the unions due to the difference that emerges in employee interests. This highlights failure in negotiation tactics due to the failure of engaging all stakeholders. According to the reviews by Webster (2017), there are clusters of progressive individuals who have broken away from the trade unions and their affiliates with the realisation that being a member was detrimental to the achievement of individual goals that are aligned to the organisational objectives of their workplace. Despite this, the respondents argued that the companies have not yet achieved the capacity to conduct effective and fair employee evaluations for individualised performance to be the sole determinant of how workers are compensated. Despite this, the workers who break away from the unions use other strategies to negotiate for better pay and employment conditions, among other interests. From this perspective, researchers are at a consensus that the labour unions will remain a key influence through the collective bargaining of the worker's welfare and compensation (Bhorat, 2000). Furthermore, the studies highlight that there are legal provisions that support the role played by labour unions in negotiating for the workers' rights and interests.

Drawing from the insights presented by an array of researchers, the labour union representatives or stewards have some fundamental responsibilities that foster the achievements made in negotiations. These include helping and representing workers at their request and addressing issues that emerge in the organisational setting. Also, they ensure that most companies comply with the Labour Relation Act and the legal provisions that regulate the terms and conditions of employment and the various collective agreement aspects. From this perspective, the stewards act as the link through which the labour unions influence the activities in the company (Katz-Lavigne, 2017). In their mandate, the union representatives also report any failure of the mining companies to comply with the law and agreements with employees, trade union, and other relevant stakeholders (Webster, 2017). In this light, the union representatives have to be keen on identifying the shortcomings in the workplace and employee concerns through communication and facilitating the flow of information from the workplace to the union and the company management. The stewards foster negotiations between the different stakeholders based on the employment terms. Studies show that negotiations for employee needs are achieved through various strategies that are facilitated by the union representatives (Bhorat, 2000).

Collective bargaining is achieved through the union representatives in negotiating the interests of the company and unions (Katz-Lavigne, 2017). The collective bargaining entails focusing on various issues such as the employee wages, working hours, worker health and safety, organisation policies, conflicts at the workplace, and addressing grievances between the workers and the company. Studies confirm that engaging the labour unions in such negotiations has a substantial influence on how organisations operate in an effective approach despite several shortcomings. Additionally, there are legal provisions that have been established to ensure that the negotiations are conducted in good faith by all participants (Standing, 1992). These include upholding openness and fairness in how negotiations are conducted. Consideration of all stakeholder interests was deemed critical in achieving success in how employee, company, and union objectives are achieved. Fundamentally, the scholars alluded that negotiations should be strategic in the implementation of change. For instance, negotiating new contracts should be conducted before the old one expires. The negotiations should be conducted with input from both sides based on the specific objectives (Bhorat, 2000). The management of mining firms alluded that negotiation that were not effectively formulated resulted in disagreements between the employers and employees, leading to action by the union to push for the employee's interests (Katz-Lavigne, 2017). This can include extreme measures such as striking, parading, and boycotting further engagement in collective bargaining.

There was no doubt that among these measures, strikes are an important strategy in advocating for the interests of the people. The economic strikes are conducted due to issues such as wages, working hours, and working conditions. The strikes often involve a vast majority of the workforce and are often led by a particular union. Reviews show that the strikes are less effective if the interests of the employees are diverse, and the different labour unions lack a consensus in addressing the issues. This is referenced in recent events, where the failure of collective bargaining resulted in confrontational actions among workers represented by different labour unions. In this context, the reports and researchers highlight that

there are some risk factors that influence the actions of trade unions to take extreme measures such as strikes and confrontations (Katz-Lavigne, 2017). These include situations where an employee experiences uncertainties in job security, changes in the employment contracts, detrimental working conditions, and ignorance of the employers in addressing employee needs.

Other measures identified by the researchers in the negotiation of employee interests are parading, which entails using banners and other materials to display information to the public about some negative aspects concerning the workplace. According to Moll (1993), such approaches are valid where the employer lacks effective measures to protect human rights. It is also effective where the employees are not happy with their compensation. The parading approaches are linked to other strategies such as boycotting. This entails conducting advocacy among the people and buyers to boycott the products of the company to limit the opportunities of gaining productivity (Katz-Lavigne, 2017). The researchers argue that this is a practical approach, but it is complicated due to the complexity of the supply chain in the mining industry and the fact that the goods from the mining companies are not directly consumed by the people who are in cross proximity to the workers (Webster, 2017).

Summary

This section offers the insights gained in the research. The study established that the roles of the labour unions have a substantial impact on the mining industry. The impact on companies is diverse based on the actions taken by the unions. In some cases, the productivity of the companies is enhanced when the labour unions can motivate the workforce to engage in the workplace. In other cases, productivity is compromised when the actions taken are not aligned to the corporate objectives. In this context, strikes have a tremendous impact because they compromise employee and organisational productivity and profitability. Resultantly, it is difficult for companies to meet employee needs. The unions also impact on companies by pressuring them to meet the employee needs and requirements. This is reflected by improved wages and living conditions. Though the collective bargaining fostered by labour unions, different stakeholders come together to strategise on the employee needs. This implies that the outcomes of collective bargain determine the contribution made by the mining companies to the national economy.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The intent of this research was to investigate the impact of labour unions in the mining industry. The study was achieved through a qualitative approach that entails gathering insights from secondary sources to review previous studies and policies and primary research to gather insights from respondents engaged in the mining industry, including union representatives or stewards and mid-level managers or supervisors. The study establishes that the impact of labour unions in the mining companies is influenced by the effectiveness of communication between the different stakeholders involved. The flow of information offers justification on the effectiveness of representation and the identification and negotiation of the challenges faced. Based on the insights gathered, the impact of trade unions includes increased democratic approach at how employee needs are addressed by the organisations. It also results in a reduced focus on organisational objectives as workers' interests and commitment to the companies is shaped by the labour unions.

Based on these insights, the role of labour unions has both positive and negative contributions. Resultantly, workers are increasingly withdrawing membership to ensure that their objectives are achieved and aligned to the organisational objectives. In this light, the role of labour unions can be improved through legal provisions that reduce the negative impacts that they have in the workplace. Seekings and Natrass (2015) show that policies play an essential role in shaping how the workplace becomes productive, and organisational objectives are achieved. Workers in the mining sector should also consider participating in a single labour union that can reduce the friction that emerges when their interests are represented by different entities. Williams, Davies, and Chinguno (2015) alludes that a standardized approach in managing labour issues based on best practices that have been upheld across the globe can be useful in addressing the challenges faced in the sector. The findings of this research show

that there is a substantial impact on the mining industry by the role played by the labour unions. The research has achieved the objectives of the study by establishing that the roles of labour unions are premised on the need to advocate for the needs and interests of workers in a strategic and collaborative approach. The structures of labour union facilitate the link between the workforce, the company, the union leaders. This ensures effective flow of information and collective actions based on specific objectives. Collective bargaining offers an array of opportunities to communicate employee needs and interests. Based on the findings made in this study, there is a need for the labour unions to improve how they engage with others to prevent the conflict of interests. This can enhance the benefits emerging from collective bargaining and support the inherent needs of the workforce. Further studies should focus on the conflict of interest among different labour unions and the solutions that should be implemented to enhance the collective bargaining strategies.

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