

Is Collective Bargaining For Better Working Conditions an Option for Security Guards from Samburu Community Working In Nairobi?

Author

Andrew Ropilo Lanyasunya^{ID}

Email: ropilolanyasunya@gmail.com

Indra Gandhi National Open University, India

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Abstract

The study determines whether collective bargaining for better working conditions is an option for security guards from the Samburu community working in Nairobi. The theoretical framework of the study was the Interests Theory of human rights, which emphasised the capacity of the right-holder (employee) to have rights and the obligation of the right-grantor (employer) to grant those rights. The research adopted a survey design to investigate the welfare of security guards from nomadic pastoralist communities working in Nairobi. The study involved all security guards from the Samburu community working in Nairobi as the population of study and individual security guards as the unit of analysis. Five areas of the city, that is, Westlands/Kabete, Lavington/Kangemi/Waithaka/Muthaiga/Thika Road, Karen/Lang'ata, South C/South B and Embakasi, were marked out as the places from which the study sample was taken from each of these areas. A sample of 200 security guards was selected through random sampling. The data used in the study was both quantitative and qualitative. The study focused on several employee welfare issues, including employee exposure to knowledge about trade unions, which is relevant to collective bargaining for better working conditions. The indicators examined in the study to assess the granting or non-granting of employee rights included membership in a trade union and collective bargaining rights. The findings indicated that security guards lacked information about trade unions and were not enjoying their collective bargaining rights.

Key terms: Collective bargaining, employee, employer, labour union, terms of employment.

INTRODUCTION

A low level of formal education on the part of security guards from nomadic pastoralist areas means that they are not exposed to knowledge about trade unions and the benefit they can get from membership in the same, especially so the ability to bargain collectively for their rights at work. Consequently, they are left at the mercy of their employers as far as their welfare and provision of their rights at the workplace are concerned. Therefore, there is a possibility that the rights of security guards from nomadic pastoralists working in Nairobi face a real threat, and the possibility of neglect of their welfare is real.

Samburu Community working in Nairobi is catered for in light of the requirements of labour laws. The literature reviewed revealed that documented information concerning the quality of life of security guards from Samburu Community working in Nairobi, which is underpinned by their terms of employment and their working conditions, is not available. Therefore, there is a lack of a basis for addressing their plight as far as employment terms and conditions are concerned. This study aimed to determine whether collective bargaining for better working conditions is an option for security guards from the Samburu community working in Nairobi.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Korir and Kipkebut (2016) investigated the way total reward programmes were related to employee engagement and whether the rewards programme had any association with the performance of the organisation. The study was carried out using a survey design involving a university staff member in Nakuru, Kenya. The study found that performance was enhanced when rewards were favourable to the employees, and managers performed better when they were facilitated to enhance the engagement and commitment of those under their supervision with performance rewards. This study was carried out over a wide population that cut across different continents, so it could not capture characteristics pertinent to minority employee groups. The current study confines itself to Nairobi City and looks at remuneration issues involving security guards from the Samburu community, a minority group.

Koskey and Sakataka (2015) also did a study on the effect of rewards on employee engagement and commitment at Rift Valley Bottlers Company. The researcher opines that rewards in many forms have a direct influence on the employees' welfare. For instance, medical insurance coverage enables employees to access medical treatment promptly and thus reduces absenteeism levels.

Proper and health-promoting conditions at the workplace are important employee rights. Markey et al. (2013) examined the level of job satisfaction of employees in relation to the condition at work, using the intention to quit a job as the indicator of the level of satisfaction. They investigated the characteristics of a good workplace environment from the employee's point of view and the impact of policies for a good workplace environment on employee job satisfaction. They indicated the absence of stress and being informed on important decisions as being the key ones. The research adopted a multi-method design involving survey and case-study approaches, using questionnaires as the research tools. It found that employees who perceived the working conditions as good had a high level of job satisfaction, so they did not intend to quit, while the majority of those who wanted to quit their jobs thought the workplace was not good enough to work in. This study looked at the issue of job satisfaction mainly for those who worked in offices and who were at employment levels, which made it necessary for them to be informed on important decisions affecting the workplace. So, the findings may not apply to non-office workers and to those who may not necessarily need to be consulted or informed when decisions are being made with regard to their level of job satisfaction. This study will bridge this gap by looking into the working conditions of security guards whose work is outside the office and whose line of duty is not directly related to the functions of the premises they guard.

Hameed and Amjad (2019) examined the relationship between office design and employee productivity for bank workers in Abbottabad, Pakistan, in which they analysed the design of the bank offices, the features which employees valued at the place of work, and deemed to determine whether office design really affected employee productivity, and the impact of office design on employee productivity. A sample of 21

bank branches out of a total of 31 branches in Abbottabad was selected, and 105 employees from the sample branches were interviewed through a questionnaire. Furniture, noise level, lighting, temperature and spatial arrangement were examined. The research showed that office design had an impact on employee productivity, and among the factors examined, lighting was found to be the most important critical factor that affected employees' productivity. This study brought to focus the importance of a proper working environment with regard to employee productivity. However, it confined itself to the environment in the bank, where all employees are housed under the same roof. It, therefore, could not provide information that could relate to cases where employees worked in different buildings within the same compound or even outdoors. The current study will examine the working conditions of security guards, whose work is mainly outdoors and in a variety of environments.

METHODOLOGY

The research adopted a survey design to investigate the welfare of security guards from nomadic pastoralist communities working in Nairobi. The study was carried out within Nairobi City. Nairobi City is the capital city of the nation of Kenya, the economic powerhouse of the Eastern and Central African region. Nairobi Comity is the most populous city in East Africa, with a population of over three million people. It is located in the South-Central part of the country, at an altitude of 1680 m above sea level. It is 1.28330 South of the Equator and 36.81670 East of the Greenwich Meridian. The study involved all security guards from the Samburu community working in Nairobi as the population of study and individual security guards as the unit of analysis. Five areas of the city, that is, Westlands/Kabete,

Lavington/Kangemi/Waithaka/Muthaiga/Thika Road, Karen/Lang'ata, South C/South B and Embakasi, were marked out as the places from which the study sample was taken from each of these areas. Thus, clustering was used as a prelude step in selecting the study sample.

The researcher initially carried out a reconnaissance visit to the study areas, listing all the security guards from nomadic pastoralist communities according to the five clusters of administrative areas described above. From these clusters, a sample of 200 security guards was selected through random sampling. Random sampling gives each individual in the study population an equal opportunity to be selected: this creates a situation where the sample is a true representation of the study population (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The data used in the study was both quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative data was gathered through questionnaires, which were constructed in such a way that they captured different kinds of information that would be required to address the objectives of the study. For that reason, both open-ended and closed questionnaires were used. A pilot study was carried out to assess the content-related validity of the questionnaires before the actual research was carried out.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Collective Bargaining Option for Security Guards

The objective of this study was to determine whether collective bargaining for better working conditions was an option for security guards from Samburu Community working in Nairobi. To address this objective, the security guards were assessed on awareness about trade unions for employees and membership in the same. Table 1 shows their responses:

Table 1: Collective Bargaining As an Option for Security Guards

	YES	Percentage	NO	Percentage
Aware of Trade Unions for employees	18	9%	182	91%
Membership in Trade Unions	0	0%	200	100%

From the table above, only 9 per cent of the security guards were aware of the existence of trade unions for employees, while 91 per cent were not. Of those who had this awareness, none had joined a trade

union. These findings are portrayed in the column chart below:

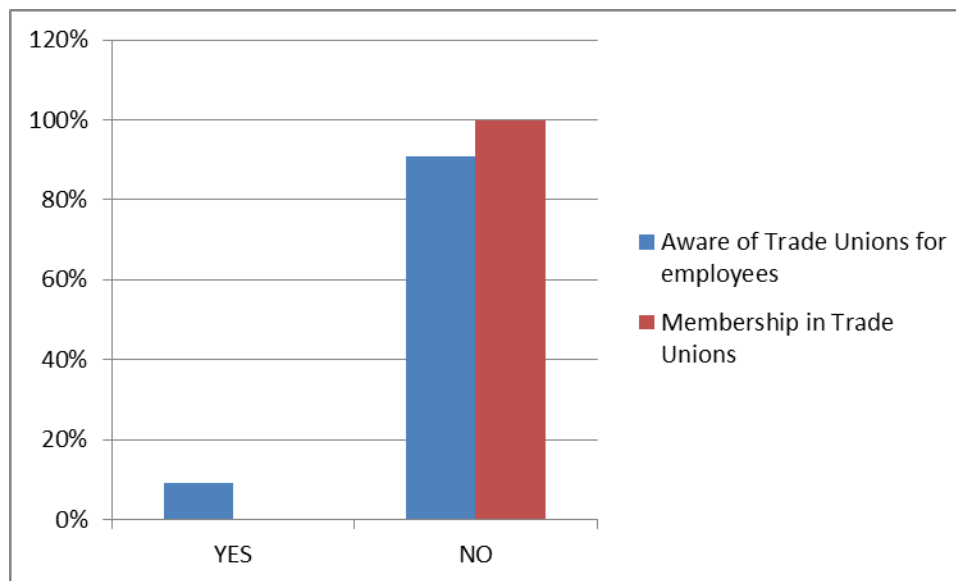


Chart 1: Collective Bargaining as an Option for Security Guards

Discussion

Collective Bargaining Option for Security Guards

The study found that only 9 per cent of the security guards were aware of the existence of trade unions for employees, and 0 per cent were involved in trade unions. This meant that security guards were not enjoying their right of collective bargaining for better terms of employment as provided for by the Industrial Relations Charter (IRC), which the Government of Kenya recognises (ILO, 2022). For security guards, lack of representation by trade unions meant that their grievances with regard to their working conditions and relations with their employers lacked support and, therefore, went unaddressed. According to Saundry et al. (2018), the presence of trade union officials in dispute resolutions and bargaining engagements between employees and employers serves as a great

advantage to employees, and those who are thus represented get accorded their rights. This was not the case for the security guards.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion: Security guards were not enjoying their right of collective bargaining through affiliation to trade unions; their grievances with regard to their working conditions and relations with their employers remained unaddressed

Recommendation: The trade union movement in Kenya should reach out to security guards to enrol them and register an organisation for them which can effectively pursue the issues regarding their welfare at work

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