

Impact of Trade Union in the Hotel Workers

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Abstract

Along with the implementation of democracy, Nepalese people are privileged of having different categories of human rights. Among them, trade union is one of the major political rights. The workers in industry, trade, business and other labour markets are organized within the trade union. Hotels are supposed to be the service industry or business organizations that are found increasing rapidly in the post 1990's democratic era. Hence, in this post-republican democracy along with settlement of the Maoist arms conflict, hotel business seems to be blooming. In order to be successful in the hotel business, it requires skilled manpower for providing good services. Skillful labourers require having basic rights with several privileges only then they can be fully devoted and committed to their profession, which may lead to a successful hotel business. Pokhara is a renowned place for tourism and hotel business. There are around one thousand hotels here including stars and non-stars. There are different trade unions for organizing the hotel workers for their rights. Whether such unions are working for seeking more privileges to their members is a major question for research. In this regard, to study the role and impact of trade unions among the hotel workers in Pokhara is the main objective of this research paper. Two hotels as one from stars and another from non-stars were chosen for obtaining the required data for the fulfillment of the objective. As with the opening of trade unions

in almost every sector of industry, including the hospitality, the rights of the labour are taken into considerations. Being united under the trade unions, workers are obtaining various facilities as job security, allowances and basic salary as prescribed by the governmental rules. It has been found that many workers have positive attitudes towards trade unions and the managements have also been positive towards workers as well as unions. Most of the workers enjoy the union memberships and participate in the union activities. But some of them are not satisfied with union activities, because they believe the leaders are more guided and directed by their self-interests and their affiliated political parties. However, as per workers perspective there is cooperative relationship between trade unions and hotel management in fulfillment of their basic and other rights.

Keywords: Employees, employers, hotel management, labourers, trade union, workers.

1. Introduction

Trade union, which is also called labour union, association of workers in a particular trade, industry, or company, created for the purpose of securing improvements in pay, benefits, working conditions, or social and political status through collective bargaining (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trade_union). A trade union is an organization of labourers' or workers' union who have come together to obtain the common goals such as protecting the integrity of its trade, improving safety standards, achieving higher pay and benefits such as health care and retirement funds, similarly, increasing the number of employees, etc. An employer is assigned to complete the work, and make better working conditions. The trade union, through its leadership, bargains with the employers on behalf of union members and negotiates agreement or contract by collective

bargaining with employers. Improving the conditions of their employment is the most common purpose of these associations or unions (Wright, 2011). Trade union is also defined as an organization whose membership consists of workers and union leaders, united to protect and promote their common interests. The principal purposes of labour union are to (1) negotiate wages and working condition terms, (2) regulate relations between workers (its members) and the employers, (3) take collective action to enforce the terms of collective bargaining, (4) raise new demands on behalf of its members and (5) help settle their grievances (<http://www.businessdictionary.com>). Basically, as traditional notion, trade union is the only vehicle to increase wages & facility and that is for strikes and collective bargaining. Now, it is regarded as one of the social partners too. Therefore, trade union has two-fold responsibilities as Professional work and Social responsibility. Rights and interests concerning their job and employment as of public image has been demonstrated as professional work. So far social responsibility, trade union forwards the programs to liberate the oppressed segment of society (Rimal, 2001)

The history of trade union movement in Nepal is of recent origin. There were no trade unions in Nepal before 1945 as the country was under the family rule of Ranas. At that time, Nepal had followed closed-door economy having almost no relations with the outside world. In 1946 All Nepal Trade Union Congress (ANTUC) was formed. Likewise, Biratnagar Workers Union (BWU) was set up in 1947 (Palikhe, 2057 BS). In March 1947 the first workers' movement took place at Biratnagar for the establishment of democracy. In 1951 ANTUC and BWU became united and formed the first trade union federation in Nepal. The World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) in 1953 granted membership to ANTUC (FES, 2001; NTUC, 1998).

After the democratic change of 1950, the freedom of association and political rights allowed the opportunities to many voluntary organizations in the country. It also granted the freedom of expression and association, which has inspired the formation of trade unions. Hence, the workers felt the need to be united under one umbrella to fight against the exploitation of the management and the government. However, many trade unions came into existence at this time. The evolution of trade union stopped as a result of Panchayat system that introduced in 2017 B. S., which went for thirty years. Along with the human rights, right to association and expression were dissolved at this era (FES, 2001; Rimal and Badal, 2002)

After collapse of the party-less Panchayat system along with restored the multiparty system was restored in 1990 insuring freedom of associations and organizations, various human rights and fundamental rights were provided to the people. Likewise, Nepal has declared federal democratic republic in post April 2006 by reestablished parliament. After the reestablishment of the parliament, general elections were held for the Constituent Assembly in 2008 and 2013. The second CA enacted and promulgated the Constitution of Nepal, which has provided many advanced and extensive human rights including trade unions' rights as the fundamental rights to the Nepali citizens. Trade union right is one of the human rights, which is mentioned in the constitution. Article 34 of the present constitution of Nepal has provided fundamental rights to organize the trade union, participate in it and collective bargaining through it (Constitution of Nepal, 2072).

Since the establishment of democracy and republic system, there have been mushrooming growths of trade unions in every factory, industry, service, hotel, trade and transit sectors and

other labour markets. They are heavily divided in the line of political ideologies, each party has its own union in the working place. With the passage of time, most of these unions could not exist and some of the unions are merged. For example, along with the formation of Nepali congress (democratic) due to its split from mainstream Nepali Congress, Democratic Federation of Nepal Trade Union (DEFONT) was formed as divided from Nepal Trade Union Congress (NTUC). But when splinted party merged with mainstream congress like DEFONT also merged with NTUC. Hence, several labour unions are associated with the general trade union federations, among them the major ones are NTUC (Nepal Trade Union Congress), GEFONT (General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions), and ANTUF (All Nepal Trade Union Federation (Revolutionary)), as affiliated with the ideological line of Nepali congress, CPN-UML and CPN-Maoist center respectively (FES, 2001).

2. Objectives and Methodology

Trade union is an organization, which consists of labourers and their leaders in order to protect and promote their common interests. The purposes of union are to make necessary demands and negotiate with the employers in relation with the collective interests of its members. It also regulates relations between labourers and the employer in terms of raising new demands, bargaining with employer and assist to reconcile the workers' grievances. In this perspective, workers' attitudes and beliefs towards their leaders are the means to make the trade union successful. Effective trade union can perform well and can bargain and negotiate with the employer by seeking support of its members. However, what is the role of trade union and their relationship with employer as the hotel management is the basic part of this study. To study about the perceptions of labourers

on the Trade Unions' activities and to explore their positive and negative impacts among the workers in relation with the hotels' management are the basic objectives of this paper.

Writing research paper is a process of systematic inquiry and scientific process through which required data and information are needed to fulfill the given objective/s. This study is based on the primary source of information and those are in quantitative and qualitative in nature. Author had selected two hotels; Fishtail Lodge as star and Tara as a non-star strata. There were around 200 total workers, among them 20 respondents were selected by using judgmental sampling as non-probability method. Interview schedules were conducted with them to collect the primary data. Likewise, in-depth interviews were conducted with some workers, three union leaders and two hotel managers for obtaining required data as part of trade union's impacts on hotel management.

3. Workers' view on trade unions' activities in hotels

Nepal is a country of heterogeneous culture, mountains, green hills, and rivers and lakes including biodiversity; therefore it is regarded as the well-known tourist destination. Among various tourist destinations in the country, Pokharavalley is famous for being one of the most important hubs for domestic and foreign tourism. It has varieties of hotels ranging from the cheaper hotels to the grand star hotels. There are around 200-recorded but the number reach around 1000 including the recorded and unrecorded as well as big and small hotels in Pokhara valley. Hotels are categorized as star hotels, resorts, guesthouses, lodges, hotels and inns and even home stays. Tourism is one of the major industries of Nepal that have been promoting significantly the hotel business and providing employment opportunities (Kayastha, 2008).

The author had purposively selected the Hotel Fishtail as one from star hotels and Hotel Tara from non-star strata. Fishtail is a renowned, oldest and 4 star hotel and Tara is a hotel that represents the other non-stars and ordinary hotels. Trade unions were more activated in big hotels whereas there were no unions working in place of non-stars hotels. For such workers, different sector of trade unions try to give their membership and organize under their umbrella. Fishtail Lodge remained under the GEFONT affiliations for a long time and at present along with it; NTUC and ANFTU are competing to take lead in the hotel.

As stated above, two hotels were selected purposely for obtaining required data as per getting the answers of the objectives. However, there were 20 total respondents as 17 from Fishtail and 3 from Tara. Out of the total respondents, 25 percentage was from the age group between 18 to 38 years old. Whereas, 65 percentage was from 38 to 58 age group, and 10 percentage was from above 58 years age group. As per the involvement in the interview schedule, male employees were around 80 percentage; whereas the number of female employees was around 20 percentages. According to the national figure, size of labour force is of 11 Millions and annual growth rate is 2.4 percentage. Of the total labour force, women cover 47% but in agriculture, women cover 62 percentage of the total labour. However, in formal sector of work only 4 percentage of the total labour force is female (Rimal, 2001).

3.1 Trade unions' activities in view of workers

Table 1: Activities of Trade unions in their working place

| Description | No. of Respondents | Frequency |
|---------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| Regular active | 9 | 45.00 |
| Occasionally Active | 6 | 30.00 |
| Inactive | 5 | 25.00 |
| Total | 20 | 100.00% |

Source: Field Survey 2017.

Table 1 mentioned above shows as what the workers perceive as the activities of trade unions in the hotel. Out of total respondents, 45 percent get that unions are always active whereas, 30 percent think that they are occasionally active and rest 25 percent states that they are inactive in these days in comparison with the years before. Following the facts, trade unions were activated through several programs in favour of labourers due to political transition and to organize workers in their line. Hence, unions contested to forward their demands with hotel management in favour of their members and succeeded to fulfill some of their demands by making collective bargaining. They have been doing these activities since the past and have been able to solve their problems through the negotiation and reconciliation.

3. 2 Measurement of Workers on the trade unions' programs

Table 2: Satisfaction Level of the Workers on the programs of trade unions

| Description | No. of Respondents | Frequency |
|--------------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| Satisfied | 12 | 60.00 |
| Satisfied to Some extent | 3 | 15.00 |
| Not satisfied | 5 | 25.00 |
| Total | 20 | 100.00 % |

Source: Filed Survey 2017.

Table 2 represents the satisfaction level gained by the general members from their trade unions. Accordingly, 60 percentage of general members of trade unions are satisfied with the activities of their trade union whereas, 25 percentage states that they are not satisfied, and 15 percentage say they are satisfied to some extent. The view of dissatisfied workers is that they would expect much more activities of their unions. However, this shows that although some of them are not satisfied, trade unions in hotel are effective working in favour of their members. Accordingly, higher unemployment, lower paid jobs and unfavourable working conditions badly affect the workers in Nepal (Dahal, 2002). The situation has changed due to the widening and accepting democratic values in every sector of state including tourism industry. As opinions expressed by the key informants, different trade unions are emerged in post republic democracy in hotels. They have been contested fairly and some time unfairly to organize the workers under their own umbrella by forwarded the demands on behalf of workers' interests to the hotel management. Workers think that due to existence of different trade unions, they are getting the basic rights, i.e. salary, paid leave and health and other facilities as per government rule, dresses and good condition in their working places.

3. 3 Trade unions affecting the Hotel’s regular work

Table 3: Trade unions affecting the regular work of the hotel

| Description | No. of Respondents | Frequency |
|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| Sometimes | 10 | 50.00 |
| Regular | 7 | 35.00 |
| Affecting not at all | 3 | 15.00 |
| Total | 20 | 100.00 % |

Source: Field Survey 2017.

Above mentioned table3 represents whether the labor unions affect the regular work of hotel or not. In this question 35 percentage respondents response as it affects regular work, 15 percentagerepresent it doesn’t affect, and 50 percentage represent that sometimes affect in the regularity of the work. Trade unions are allowed to organize in hotels for forwarding the job security and collective bargaining in favour of workers. But these are succeeded only when hotels’ businesses are smoothly going on and make good profit. It would be happened when trade union and hotel management have cordial relationship and accepted, as they are stockholder responsible for succeeding their business. Accordingly, sometime they contradict and contest due to their parochial consideration towards one petty interest.

3. 4 Response of Hotel management over the Trade unions’ demands

Table 4: Demands solved by the hotel authority

| Description | No. of Respondent | Frequency |
|---------------|-------------------|-----------|
| All the times | 14 | 70.00 |
| Few times | 6 | 30.00 |
| Total | 20 | 100.00 |

Source: Field survey 2017.

Table 4 represents whether the management of hotel has solved

all the demands of the trade union. Whereas, most of the respondents as 70 percentage calculate that the demands are being solved. Likewise, 30 percentage respondents think that the demands are solved only few times. Following this information, workers in hotel are satisfied with their trade union leaders, as they have been succeeded to fulfill their demands by bargaining and negotiation. Hotels management has positively considered over their collective interest, therefore, resolve the demands as their own ability and convening to the union leaders.

3.5 Overall Role of Trade unions in Hotels

Table 5: Workers’ perception on the role of trade unions in hotel

| Descriptive | No. of Respondents | Frequency |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------|
| Positive | 12 | 60.00 |
| Supportive | 4 | 20.00 |
| Formal | 4 | 20.00 |
| Total | 20 | 100.00 % |

Source: Field survey 2017.

In hotel industry employer and employee are the stockholder in order to make the tourism business success. Performance played by the employees in the hotel business determinates the attitudes of the employers towards the trade union existing over there. Table 5 that mentioned above shows us how the hotel management takes the trade union. Out of the total respondents, 60 percentage state that it has positive attitude, whereas, 20 percentage think there is supportive attitude, and rest of the 20 percentage respondents feel the formal attitude. As the data show that the top-level officers impress majority of the workers as they treated their union positively. Likewise, some workers perceive that hotel employers have been taken their unions as the supportive wing to benefit the hotel business whereas some

other think it just a formal behavior.

4. Impact of Trade Unions in Hotel Business

Although the hotel business has been a very good industry and one of the best ways of earning livelihood in most of the tourist hang around destinations like Pokhara. The economy and life style of the workers and staffs have heightened to an extreme level; there are still a lot of pros and cons due to the involvement of trade unions in the hotels of Pokhara. Trade unions are established to protect and promote the labourers' interests and rights. Beyond these professional duties, they may initiate social responsibility through several programs. Hence, supported by stockholders as well as guided by their political parties, trade unions forward several demands and activities to the management and authority of hotels. However, contradicting interests as the employees and employers, positive and negative relations could be traced in terms of role of trade union in hotel business.

4.a) Positive Impact

In this age of globalisation, while discussing the social charter, the issues of social protection and social security comes as the core agenda for trade unions both in the developed and underdeveloped world. The major components of social security system such as Old age benefits, Unemployment benefits, Compensation of workplace injuries, Medicare, Sickness benefits, Maternity protection, Invalidity and Family as well as survivors benefits, should not be curtailed, but should be expanded to cover the workers of informal & self-employed areas of work. It may be phase-wise in implementation, based on the stage of socio-economic development of the country in question (Rimal, 2002).

Most of the workers and their unions' leaders stated that before

the organizing the trade union in hotel, there was time when they were treated in inhuman nature. Now, the situation has been changed with the establishment of the trade unions in the existing era of republic democracy the rights of the labourers are taken into positive considerations. Hence, various facilities are also increased for them; for example, concept of 8 hours of work, 8 hours of rest and 8 hours of enjoyment is brought in practice. As stated by the workers' leaders to the author, at present they have positive attitude towards hotel business and the hotel managements have also positive attitude towards workers and their unions. Most of the workers accept the union membership and participate in the union activities. The workers also agreed with the important roles of union, which keeps sound and smooth labor management relations. The workers have felt job security and have enjoyed some of basic and extra facilities in their working place.

The regular work of the hotel was hardly affected due to the presence of labour unions in this industrial business of Pokhara. According to the trade union leaders and hotel managers, the management of the hotel fulfilled the demands forwarded by the labor unions. But before that the leaders of the union and the management discussed and convinced each other and negotiated on the demand put forward. Most of the time till date, the management of the hotel has fulfilled the demands of the increment of salary that forwarded by the trade unions. Besides the salary as per government rule, other major achievements gained by the unions are found as pay leave, medicine, gratitude, dress and quality of food is increased in the staff cafeteria. Likewise, gymnasium is opened for the staffs of the hotel. Likewise, the hotel management assures the provision of Provident Fund to the employees and 10 % service charge is separated for them. Free medical check up on weekends, leave without pay facility

are also enforced as per the demand of the trade unions. A total of 45 days leave in average, annual sport and picnic programs are also conducted time to time for the enhancement of good relation in between hotel management and employees.

4.b) Negative Impact

Higher unemployment, lower paid jobs and unfavorable working conditions badly affect the workers. Such interests increase the dissatisfaction of workers as diunionise and weakening the bargains capacity of the union in there workplace (Rimal, 2001; Dahal 2002). Along with these, due to natural disasters and political upheavals, tourism business has been in crises time to time. If hotels are not smoothly run, then several troubles arise which directly have a bad affect to the hotel owner and workers. Recently, Hotel Fulbari as the five stars with deluxe have closed and collapsed due to lack of quality tourists and conflict in between its management and trade unions. Hotels in Pokhara have severely encountered such bitter experiences. Hence, over politicized and guided by own parochial interests some union leaders misuse the spirit of trade unionism.

During the interviews with key informants some grievances were also observed in regards to the trade unions in hotel business. Some of the union leaders were found irresponsible and unaccountable to their members at large. They did not transparent their funds as well as their talks and relation with the employers. Likewise, most of the foundations of the trade unions were formed relying on particular political parties, so the unions are badly affected and overruled by the political pressures most of the times. This resulted in creating groups among the workers rather than union that playing a role for the benefit of workers instead. Most of interviewees thought that trade unions were very weak to determine the uniform policies of government for

effective labourers' rights in various types of hotel business. Ultimately the union leaders were thought to be incapable of working for the benefit of both employees and the employers. As the view of trade union leaders and managers, the management and union were always in disputes in their interests and demands rather than realizing the importance of dialogue and discourses for the effective negotiation. Some workers felt that trade unions have been initiated to fulfill their professional demands and to some extent they have succeeded. But they could not forwards other programs related to social responsibilities in favour of the labourers and society at large. Hence, expect some formal activities, trade unions have not initiated any program in strengthening the moral and professional skills of their members in hotels.

There was hardly any lockouts organized by any trade unions in the hotel but it was found that the Hotel Fishtail to be locked out twice till date. But in view of the managers, sometimes the labourers unions invite some of their members to take part in various protests and rallies that might be organized by their affiliated parties. During those periods the other staffs have a burden to continue the regular business of the hotel. This is the reason why the workers do not normally like to involve in such affairs of the unions. But some key informants from workers side stated that if there is a single union, it couldn't properly address the rights of the employees. It is a question of to be or not to be. If there is only one trade union, it cannot address the whole a lot. If there are more unions, there are unhealthy contests as they try to seek the more support and popular among the workers. Hence, they expressed that frequent activities of trade unions including their parties' interests sometimes affect the day-to-day smooth business of the hotel.

5. Conclusion

A trade union right is the basic right for the employees who are working in different types of profession. With the opening of trade unions in almost every sector of industry, including the hospitality and hotel industries, the rights of the labourers are taken into consideration. There is a positive impact of trade unions among the employees in the hotels of Pokhara. They believed that their unions have the supportive and negotiative role in order to promote the workers' interest and benefit of the hotel business. Therefore, hotel management has fulfilled most of the demands forwarded by the trade unions. Hotel workers receive basic salary as per the government rule and other facilities. They are also with they are treated as one of the basic parts of the hotels. Employers have realized that this business is not possible without them and their happiness.

Trade unions are accepted as the major intuitions not only the unity of the employees' rights, it is also the bridging machinery between hotel management and the workers for solving the crises that may occur time and again. The workers have positive attitudes towards their union and the hotel management has also positive attitudes towards workers as well as their unions. Most of the workers enjoy the union membership of the union and participate in the union activities. They believe that the union is for their interests and they work for the interest of their hotels business. Therefore, the hotel managements have fulfilled most of the demands forwarded by the unions. But some of them are not satisfied with the union activities. It is because, they think that the leaders were guided and directed by their self-interest and interest of political parties, rather than being loyal to workers. The workers also agreed with the important roles of union which keep sound and smooth labourers management relations but all these managements have to be worker friendly and not affected

by any political parties so that the workers can feel safe and enjoy a lot of facilities in their sector of hotel business.

Founding the trade unions and provision of labour rules, the employees of different hotels enjoy different scales and types of facilities. Well equipped as the big and star hotel give more facilities compared to non-star and ordinary hotel. Nevertheless, the facilities provided by the management depend upon the profile earned by the hotel and also collective bargaining capacity of the unions. The present unions' activities in hotels are generally operated so as to be guided by the political parties. In spite of this, due to fair professionalism, labourers are still weak in bargaining power and their unions are not strong enough to develop the morale of the workers very high.

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