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EFFECTIVENESS OF TRADE UNIONS IN PROMOTING EMPLOYEE RELATIONS IN ORGANISATIONS.

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ABSTRACT

Trade union play great role in safeguarding employees from any form of discrimination or harassment in organisations. Employees need to work in good environment. Many researches have been done in this area but there is limited research in developing countries specifically in Botswana. Therefore, to fill this gap, this study will find out the role played by trade unions in solving labour related disputes, with specific reference to working conditions, salaries and 'fair treatment'. In addition, the study will also focus on how members perceive their work and non-work experiences and belief with their trade unions and weather the unions performed their duties in line with their expectations. The study used cross-sectional survey. The data was collected by the questionnaire. The major finding demonstrated that economic factors like changes in government policies are taken into consideration in the operations of the union. In addition, the unions also stick to their traditional view that was founded. Thus, working for the interest of its members rather than of the society it operates in, otherwise it would not serving according to the expectations of their members and this may results in decline in membership as it happened within some African countries.

Keywords: *Trade union, labour and organizations.*

INTRODUCTION

A trade union is defined in as any "organisation of workers" whose principal purposes include the regulation of relations between workers "of one or more descriptions" and employers or employers' associations (Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992)**.** It gives a broad definition which incorporates a wide variety of organizations, each with their differing commitments to the general principles and ideology of "trade unionism. The formation of trade union structure began as discussion groups formed into professional organizations which had the following functions,-negotiating for better wages, -working hours, and working conditions (Ananaba, 1979; Allen, 1960 and Glennis, 2005). The labour movement arose as an outgrowth of the disparity between the power of employers and the powerlessness of individual employees (Fraser, 1999). There are several trade unions in Botswana. For instance, Botswana Bank Employees Union, Botswana Commercial and General Workers Union, Botswana Constructions Workers Union, Botswana Federation of Trade union, Botswana Mining workers Union, Botswana power cooperation workers Union and Botswana public employees Union. All these trade unions are promoting employees relations in organisations.

The Botswana Teachers Union was inaugurated in 1937 as the Bechuanaland Protectorate African Teachers Association; and later in 1966, transformed into Botswana Teachers Union (BTU). It currently boasts a membership of 11000 professional teachers. Its primary concern was to act as a pressure group to bargain for improved conditions of service of their members. According to World Configuration of Organisations of the Teaching Professions (1989) BTU advocates for promoting education and culture, accord assistance to teachers on legal and professional matters, educate the public on the value of education, to raise the level of qualifications and the standards of performance of teachers,- and to bargain for better conditions of work. BTU has achieved the followings; equal pay for men and women, improving leadership skills of teachers through sponsorship and personnel from -teachers of Nordic countries, abolition of the Provident Fund and opting to Pension on retirement and initiating and assisting in launching the Southern African Teachers Organisation (Freeman and Medoff., 1984). Therefore, the self-organisation of labour into trade unions was a result of a mass movement of the oppressed against colonialism. The trade unions were established mainly to put into effect multiple models, for preventing workers tailored needs and concerns of different groups (BTU, 2009). The purpose of the study was to explore and evaluate the members' views about their trade unions in Botswana. In addition, the study would examine the role of government in promoting trade union in Botswana.

Problem Statement: Recently, there has been a resurgence of interest in the relationship between change in the work environment and the activities of the trade unions. Therefore, due to these rapid innovations the trade unions are taking part in a national debate about the uses and consequences of this innovation. Therefore, the important question is what kind of relationship unions have with their government in addressing the issues concerning employees. For instance, in Botswana labour disputes mainly in the public sector have become a

worrisome phenomenon. Year 2002 in particular was characterised by a number on strikes and demonstrations. Both secondary and primary school teachers waged a five-day national strike demanding better wages and working conditions (Gabathuse and Setsiba,,2002).

Laws Govern Trade Unions in Botswana: The principal legislation governing trade unions in Botswana is the Trade Unions and Employers' Organizations Act [Cap. 48:01], as amended by the Trade Unions and Employers' Organizations (Amendment) Act [No. 24 of 1992], and supplemented by the Trade Unions and Employers' Organizations Regulations [S.I. 105 of 1984]. The following is a list of the most important sections of the amended Act: Section 2 (1) is a definition section. It is significant for two reasons: It defines a trade union as 'an organization consisting, wholly or in part, of more than 30 employees the principal objects of which include the regulation of relations between employees and employers or employer's organizations or between employees and employees'. The members of a trade union must be employees as defined in the section: persons who have entered contracts of employment for the hire of their labour, but not including a public officer or any person employed by a local authority (except for industrial class workers). The Constitution provides for collective bargaining for unions that have enrolled 25 percent of a labour force. In reality, only the mineworker unions have the organizational strength to engage in collective bargaining, and collective bargaining is virtually nonexistent in most other sectors.

Types of Trade Unions: Trade unions are of two principal types: *craft unions* composed of all those performing a specific kind of work, such as electricians, carpenters, or printers; and *industrial unions* comprising all those in a given industry, such as automobile workers or steelworkers (Flanders, 1970; Fraser, 1999, Freeman *et al.,* 1984).Unions also exist among government employees and for such professional occupations as nurses, engineers, and teachers. In some countries, large general workers' unions include all semiskilled and unskilled workers in one organization.

Functions of Trade Unions: A union's purpose is to represent worker's interest, hence, union involvement consists of a collective bargaining process in order for awards and agreements to provide protection around the application performance appraisal of and performance related pay (WCOTP, 1989; BTU, 2009 and Swarnalatha and Sureshkrishna. 2011). The union also is involved through consultation in the development, implementation, the review, and the modification in anything that concerns its members. Protecting employees from unfair labour practices, encourage training of employees, offer incentives to member's e.g. medical insurance, legal advice and reduction in working hours.

Growth of Trade Unions: The growth of trade unions from the collective bargaining function towards a role dominated by voice and representation of workers seems to have taken place against the background of high density unionism, which gained ground mainly in continental Europe and in Japan, (Inoue, 1999, Glennis, 2005). The broad membership base which unions commanded and the equitable distribution, which they promoted in major sectors and enterprises, strengthened the position of unions, giving them more power to bargain or collaborate and to derive successful outcomes BOPA (2002) also argues that the commission fundamentally ignored the dictates of Vision 2016 on income distribution, which calls for a "more equitable income distribution that ensures the participation of as many people as possible in the economic success". The Union called for the implementation of the Vision's ideals instead of accepting the recommendations of the commission that would exacerbate inequality in Botswana. Among the cases cited by trade unions was the pre-employment, mandatory testing of crew members by the South African Airways. An opposite example was however given to the conference by the Human Resources Manager of Ford Motor Company, Johan Strijdom, who described the plan implemented by the company in partnership with South African trade unions and aimed at combating AIDS at the workplace. "Confidentiality is a rule, and workers can freely be tested at the company's clinic in confidence", Mr Strijdom told the audience, (ILO, 2001). Training is one of the major functions of trade unions all over the world. Training of their members and officials is essential to strengthen the organization and improve its various functions. Particularly in view of the involvement of trade unions in an increasing number of social and economic issues in the recent years, it has become even more vital for the unions to continue and expand their training activities for both their leaders and members.

The Workers' Education Programs of the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) of the ILO is aimed at assisting trade unions in promoting their training programs to expand their activities and membership and to improve their capacity to represent and defend the interests of their members. According to the president of BTU, the union plays an important role, by encouraging the employer to discharge this responsibility. Union defense of high salaries and job security has a part to play in this process because it provides an incentive to the employer to invest in skills to maximise worker productivity, (BTU, 2009). This, in

turn, reduces the possibility that the company will lose its investment in training by its workers moving on to competitors and makes it more likely that the company will invest in training (Kennedy *et al.,* 1994). Under the pressure of changes in the economic environment caused by globalization and innovations in information technology, Botswana business corporations are forced to adapt to the new situation. Companies faced with fierce international competition have implemented survival measures such as reorganizing management and restructuring the corporation. To cut labour costs many corporate managers press for changes in personnel administration to further enhance flexibility; they select or weed out individual workers according to their capabilities and performance. However, to solve the problem of retrenching employees BTU and BMWU reached certain agreements with the employers that employees should be trained regularly to avoid unnecessary labour disputes.

Role of Trade Unions: The trade union plays many roles in promoting the welfare of its members. For instance, trade unions play the role of bargaining power, minimise discrimination of any kind, sense of participation of the members, platform of self expression, betterment of employee relations (Employee and employee relationship, employee-management, management and trade unions and trade union and other stakeholders of the organisation) and sense of job security of its members. However, they are reasons why union presence may have lower labour productivity, these are unions maybe associated with restrictive work practices, Industrial action may have an adverse impact, and finally trade union firms may invest less as compared to non union firms. Similarly, reasons why union presence may raise labour productivity are firms responses to union relative wage effects may result in higher labour productivity, unions may play a monitoring role on behalf of the employer and unions can stop exploitation of labour resulting in improved productivity. Restrictive work practices lower, labour productivity for instance in cases whereby there would be certain policies for overtime so that the effort is restricted during normal working hours in order to boost total pay through overtime. Industrial action may lower output or performance where it occurs, but the output might be made good by overtime. Therefore, such action or the threat of it causes uncertainty about output level and this tends to reduce the effectiveness of resources devoted to marketing and distribution. Hence a company will be impaired if delivery dates are not met. For instance, in 2002 and 2003 when teachers were engaged for two weeks in demonstration and issued further threats, this was reflected in the results of those who were writing their final examinations during those times. Understanding this aspect of labour relations in the education sector is important because the number of days lost to strikes affects student learning and, consequently, has policy implications for the performance of the system as a whole.

Therefore, it can be argued that unions raise productivity only under very strict circumstances, if industrial relations are good with management and unions working together to produce a bigger 'pie' as well as fighting over the size of the slices, productivity is likely to be higher under unionism. Hence it can be concluded that unions posses 'two faces', one representing an efficiency enhancing effect on production and the other reflecting the potential monopoly power which enables them to negotiate better wages through collective bargaining. However, in case of BTU the pay is assumed to evolve from a 'right to manage' bargaining between an organisation and the union, providing the union cares about the employment prospects of its members. That being the case the union will allow some fall in the bargained wage to alleviate fall in the employment following a shift in the labour demand. BTU also provides employment services, insurance protection, and other benefits to members and their families.

Challenges of Trade Unions: The position of unions among traditional members has been affected because of the changing environment which has eroded their position as key allies of the State. The global flight of capital and the decline or migration of specific industries has added to the growing vulnerability of labour. Privatization, the downsizing of enterprises and the adoption of flexible employment practices have all affected the strength of unions in their traditional bastions. In the United States and other nations where no such formal ties exist, unions themselves may engage in political activities, including lobbying for legislation and supporting political candidates favourable to labour (Balliet, 1992, Munro and Rainbird, 2000). The rise of wage disparities, the differentiation of workers based on widening skill gaps has weakened the solidarity platform of trade unions. Unions are under pressure to develop wage policies, which accommodate productivity differentials for greater efficiency in resource allocation (Nurse, 1992). Worker perceptions of union effectiveness were traditionally enhanced by the unions' role in administering active labour market policies and channelling benefits, such as skill upgrading, employment services, unemployment insurance, health care and pensions. Intense competition and the emphasis on privatization seem to have undermined the status of unions as providers of vital services (Renaud, 2002). Worker commitment to unions appears to be weakening due to the rise of individualism. At the higher end of the skill spectrum, workers seem indifferent to a collective identity and are less dependent on unions. Their personal identity is

defined less in terms of class and more in terms of social functions, autonomy and mobility. It can also be recognized that public sector labour relations in Botswana, as in other developing countries, involve a high degree of government discretion with regard to union registration, strike activity, and collective bargaining. Moreover, since the government is also the employer of public educators, it has more of an incentive to use this discretion in a partisan fashion.

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for the study was cross sectional survey. Survey research was an appropriate method to use because the study sought to emphasise on people's lived experience which are fundamentally suited for locating the meaning and expectations that people place on events and structure of their lives, thus assumptions, perceptions and presumptions (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Zikmund, 2000; Grinnel, 2001; Babbie, 2001). In addition, data was collected in one particular time.

Target Population: The target population was e members of BTU which has more members and its members are Primary and Secondary Teachers in Botswana. In addition, it was felt they were more relevant to gain a rich understanding of the context of their union. However, the sample of the study was taken from Botswana teachers Union which is officially registered union. Data was collected in schools in Gaborone which is the capital city of Botswana and some schools were taken from one of the biggest villages in the central district of the country. Ten schools were selected comprised of four primary schools, three junior secondary schools and three senior secondary schools. The respondents were teachers who are members of BTU and therefore, the total sample size was one hundred and twenty five teachers.

The Survey Instrument: The survey instrument used to collect data was questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into five sections. Section 1 comprised questions related to the demographics of the respondents. Section 2 captured questions related to membership attitudes. Section 3 included questions pertaining to reasons for joining the trade union. Section 4 comprised questions pertaining to membership welfare and finally section 5 included questions related to overall satisfaction of the members in joining the trade union. The questionnaire was fist pilot tested with 4 leaders of the trade union and 4 employees of the trade union who were randomly selected. This was done to ensure validity of the instrument. Their suggestions were incorporated before final distribution of the questionnaire to the sample of the study.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data was analysed by descriptive statistics. Later on data was cross-tabulated for ease interpretation. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. Systems Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for analyzing data. Data was summarised and presented in the form of pie charts and frequency tables.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Demographics of the Respondents: One hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed to the sample of the study. However, one hundred and twenty five were duly completed and returned. Therefore, the response rate was 83%. Table 1 shows the educational qualification of the respondents. Majority of the respondents 44 % were holders of certificates and 40% holders of Diplomas.

Position of Respondents: Table 2 shows the position of the respondents. Most of the respondents were in position of senior teacher grade 2, who accounted for 35.2 %, and assistant teacher were 21.6 % respectively.

Membership of Trade Union: The questions were formulated to get the perceptions on the membership of the trade union and the empirical findings indicated that 52 % of the respondents were members of the trade union and 48 % were non-members.

Joining Trade Union: In table 4 shows the results on the reasons for joining the trade union. The empirical results indicated that 36% of the respondents joined the trade union because of the influence of other members who had earlier joined the trade union. The findings further indicated that female member were much more likely to join the trade union than their male counterparts.

Satisfaction of Service Rendered: Figure 1 show that 41% of the respondents stated that they benefited or were satisfied with services provided by the union. They gave the following as examples of the services received as legal advice or presentation pertaining to conditions of employment, getting discounts from certain shops, Housing schemes, Funeral coverage and Savings account co-operative society benefits (SACOS).

Voting of the Trade Union: Table 5 it showed that almost all the respondents 93.6% stated that they would vote for the union presentation. Only 6.4% stated that they would not vote for union presentation.

Role of Trade Union in Minimizing Trade Disputes: The members were asked whether the union helps them in minimizing trade disputes, the empirical findings indicated that 61.29% of the respondents consented that the union was helps in minimizing the disputes. In addition, the respondents stated that the union discusses issues relating to teachers working conditions with the Ministry of Education (MoE) on behalf of the teachers. 38.71% of the respondents stated that the union is not helpful in minimising the disputes since the level of disputes is growing.

Information Sharing about Union Activities: The respondents showed positive attitudes towards the union involvement or interactions with its members as indicated in Figure 2. The empirical findings indicated that hat the union communicates to its members through circulation of memorandum 25.81%, meetings 35.48%, and newspapers 38.71%. In terms of information from trade union leaders, the vast majority of the respondents said they were not satisfied with the amount, type and timing of the information they received from management. The findings were also more negative about the level of information they received, particularly regarding staffing issues and employee grievances. In addition, participants were less likely to believe the information they were given by management.

Member's Participation in Union Activities: Figure 3 shows that more than half of the respondents, 61.29% indicated that when it comes to member's participation in the union activities, women participated more willingly unlike men. One respondent stated that, ''women seem to present some threat more than men and gave the following as an example, majority of women are more concerned when it comes to their families welfare.

Overall Satisfaction of Services Provided: Table 6 indicates the overall satisfaction of services provided by the trade union. The findings indicated that members, who have been in the trade union for a period of more than 6- 10 years in the union, were more satisfied with the services provided as supported by 25% of the respondents are satisfied with the services provided.

Overall Performance of BTU: Figure 4 shows the overall performance of BTU compared to BMWU. The results indicated that 12.8% of respondents stated that the performance was not good at all, 38.4% stated that its performance was poor and 26.4% said its performance was fair and 22.4% said it was good. However, this tends to contradict with the earlier views given, that the services provided by BTU were satisfactory to teachers. Therefore, when discussing the issues of satisfaction of services provided by the union they should not be generalized because when compared to other unions the performance differs.

BTU Supports Members Welfare: Figure 5 shows the results on the satisfaction of member's welfare. Majority of the respondents, 58.4%, were not satisfied with the union when it comes to its members' welfare. It has been shown by their responses, such as'' Its only those members in the executive positions who are benefiting at the expense of others, and this could be seen in the De Villiers report which deprived us our rights.'' Therefore, this has presented mixed feelings to the extent of others suggesting that non-government employee should present the union committee. The reason being that if one is represented by someone who is on the side of government it would mean that the person would not act in good faith to the union. Only the strong side that is the state will come first, therefore the person tends to be biased when there are matters arising among the two parties, the union and the government

Conclusions and Policy Implications of the Study: This study sought to establish whether there was any relationship between Botswana Teachers Union participation in labour relations and its member's perspective. On the basis of these findings from this study showed that there is a significant relationship between the members and the union. Generally, teachers consider BTU performance in solving problems as being important, but the importance attached to the problem decreases as BTU is compared to other unions like Botswana Mining Workers Union (BMWU). Leaders of the trade unions are blamed for failure, because members approach their responsibility as "paying dues", and have long ago abrogated their true responsibility to uphold the ideals of the movement. Apathy and animosity within the organization decreases the performance of the union, increasing the union's continued decline and ineffectiveness. Trade unionism as an ideology favours membership since it boost the social esteem of members and reduces the psychic of punishing non-members. There are factors that could bring changes in the unions and affects its operations (Checchi and Lucifora, 2002). For instance, changes in the global market affect unions negatively because there are difficult to control whereas unions can encourage social contact among union members through negotiating for less working time so that leisure time can allow employees to meet.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the survival of trade unions in Botswana is determined by the unions' ability to represent their members according to their expectations. Trade unions also derive the legitimisation to represent the interest of the workforce from a high degree of union density, (Renaud, 2002; Flanders, 1970), if there is a decline in membership these would lead to union's exclusion in negotiation and unions not in position to be actively involved in representing members. For instance, from the report a decline in membership indicated that unions in Botswana maybe regarded as not being as effective as compared to their counterpart in South Africa because the membership has been increasing. Hence, a large degree of unionisation in South Africa enhances the bargaining power of trade unions. The implication of this study is that it will inspire the management of trade union to come up with various interventions to promote the spirit of trade unionism in Botswana. Simialrly, other stakeholders in the industrial relations will understand the importance of the trade union in

this era of participative management and transformation leadership. Finally, this study has extended the literature on trade union in Botswana which could be used by students and other scholars.

Limitation of the study: The limitation of the study is that cross sectional survey was used and therefore, it has its own limitations. Triangulation methods were not applied in the process of collecting data. The sample size taken was selected from one village in Botswana, that is serowe and therefore, the results cannot be generalised to areas which were not included in the study. Finally, there is need for comparative study to be undertaken on trade unions in Botswana to get holistic view on the role of trade unionism

Recommendations: The results of this study seem to suggest that while Botswana Teachers Union plays an important role in minimising and resolving disputes, there is an improvement in performance of BTU. However, these variables seem to have had very weak impact on the overall performance of the union. At this moment, all that can probably be done is to intensify union committees and to improve the effectiveness and involvement in presentation of their members. Based on the findings the following are the recommendations which need to be taken into consideration for effective management of the trade unions.

- BTU should form a committee from various regions to meet frequently with teachers, to exchange knowledge, ideas and experiences. This would help the union to assess and measure its performance standards thus comparing the set objectives and the achievements.
- The union should have a more transparent reward system in order to be effective. For instance, one respondent stated that the so-called parallel progression program is discriminating secondary school teachers and primary teachers of the same calibre.
- The union should be more decentralised, it should provide its management and members in the supervisory positions within service training on supervisory skills, especially those relating to members 'motivation and participation in the union activities.
- Like it has already stated by some respondents, the union executive committee should be mainly composed with non-government employees. This will reduce the chances of biases when making decisions, because the parties would be concerned about their members only. Also, the committee should ensure gender balance among the committee so that all members are presented equally.
- The union should make regular contacts with the members, should spread its gospel for example from this study about 68% of respondents did not know the mission statement and objectives of BTU. The union should also display its achievements in the newsletter.
- The union should consult with the government and other stakeholders. The union should consult with teachers to discuss issues such as laws governing teachers, for example Amendment of code of regulations (COR) 1976.
- The government should try as much as possible to work together with the union to avoid a situation whereby the members will regard the government as a one sided and inconsiderate party. For example, the Ministry of Education that is the employment body and as part of the government would want to protect government interest.
- BTU should merge with other teachers' organisations like BOFESTE and present themselves as one body that will be recognized as employee representative.

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Table 1: Education Qualification of Respondents

Level of education	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Certificate	55	44	44	44
Diploma	50	40	40	84
Degree	15	12	12	96
Masters	5	4	4	100.0
Total	125	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: Position of Respondents

Item	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cum percent
Senior teacher grade 1	19	15.2	15.2	15.2
Senior teacher grade 2	44	35.2	35.2	50.4
Teacher	20	16.0	16.0	66.4
Assistant Teacher	27	21.6	21.6	88.0
Head/ deputy	15	12	12.0	100
Total	125	100	100	-

Table 3: Membership of Trade Union

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Yes	65	52.0	52.0	52.0
No	60	48.0	48.0	100
Total	125	100.00	100.00	-

Table 4: Reasons for Joining Trade Union

Reasons	Male	Female	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency
Belief of collectivism	14	30	44	35.2	44
Others were members	25	20	45	36	89
Influenced by family	9	12	21	16.8	110
Other	5	10	15	12	125

Table 5: Statement showing respondents of willingness to be represented by BTU

	Frequency	percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative percent
Yes	117	93.6	93.6	93.6
No	8	6.4	6.4	100.0
total	125	100.0	100.0	

Table 6: Satisfaction with the Services Provided by BTU

Period	Very dissatisfied	Neither dissatisfied/satisfied	Satisfied	Total
1-5	12	15	20	47
6-10	10	15	25	50
11-15	4	5	19	28
total	26	35	64	125

Figure 1. Satisfaction level derived from services provided to teachers.

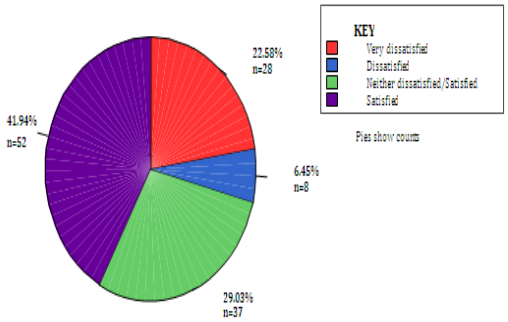


Figure 2: Members informed about the union activities.

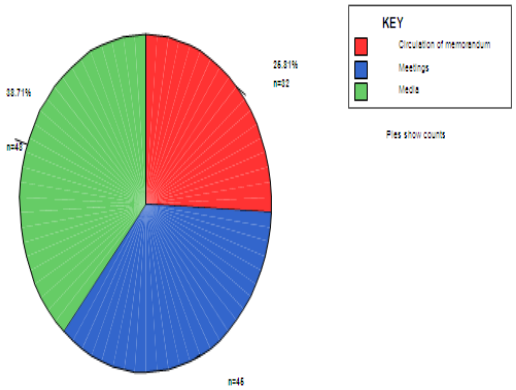


Figure 3. Members participation in union activities

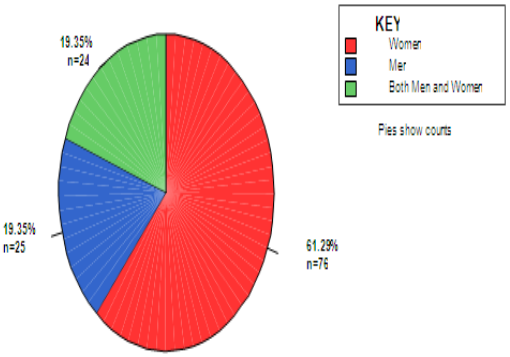


Figure 4: Overall Performances of BTUs.

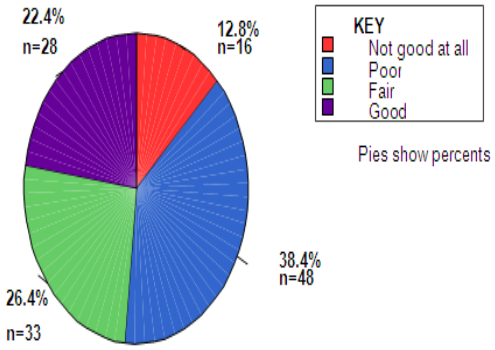
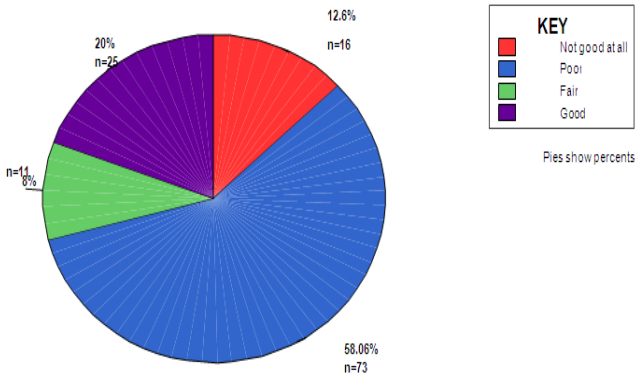


Figure 5. BTU support for its members.



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