

**EVALUATING THE ROLE OF JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON THE
PROMOTION OF EMPLOYEES' WELFARE IN THE TEA INDUSTRY. A CASE OF
SELECTED TEA ESTATES IN THYOLO DISTRICT**

**A RESEARCH THESIS IS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR THE
AWARD OF MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION OF UNIVERSITY OF
MALAWI.**

BY

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(REG: MBA/13/BT/039)

TO

DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES

FACULTY OF COMMERCE

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI-THE POLYTECHNIC

BLANTYRE

MALAWI

DECEMBER, 2022



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MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION THESIS

BY

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Submitted to the Department of Management Studies, Faculty of Commerce in Partial
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Business Administration (MBA)

**University of Malawi
The Polytechnic**

DECEMBER, 2022

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work and that it is entirely not a replica of anyone’s production that was ever submitted at any other University.

Where assistance of some kind was obtained, it has been acknowledged accordingly and where ideas of other people have been used, citations have been made in line with guiding rules and principles.

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

We confirm that the work being reported in this thesis was done by the student under our supervision as University Research supervisors. The thesis report is thus hereby being submitted with our approval.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my wife, Milliam Sambo and my children; Joseph Sambo Junior, Rebecca Sambo, Benjamin Sambo, Moses Sambo and Grace Sambo, who were very supportive, both morally and spiritually and also to my parents; Mr Godfrey Sambo and Mrs Ettiness Sambo, who encouraged and inspired me throughout my academic journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I wish to express my profound appreciations to my Supervisors, Dr R. Bakuwa and Mr W.L. Dambuleni for their constructive and insightful criticisms and guidance. Their expertise in taking me through the thesis production was immensely valuable to enable me reach this far.

Second, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my friends and classmates, numerous to mention, for their material and academic support. For instance, Mr. Solomon Chirwa and Lovemore Mwanandi were quite supportive in time of need academically and materially and not forgetting Mr Mandala, Mr Chahuhuma and Mr Ziwa who were also very supportive and cooperative during data collection in tea estates. Special thanks go to Mr Kenneth Butao for his amazing sacrifice in accompanying and assisting me during data collection exercise in tea estates. Your contributions were overwhelmingly meaningful to my today celebrated achievements.

Finally, I am indebted to my family members for their tireless and valuable support to my academic undertakings. They were very understanding to see to it that adequate time and other resources were devoted to meet my academic requirements as much as it was possible to do so.

To crown it all, I give Glory to the Almighty God for providing me a chance to study at this institution of higher learning and caring for me throughout the study period.

To everyone, I say God richly bless you for all your valuable contributions to my academic success.

ABSTRACT

The Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) is an indirect employee voice mechanism that is preferred and widely used in the tea estates in Malawi. The extensive use of JCC at the expense of Trade Unions in the tea industry and beyond has triggered the curiosity in the industrial relations circles that seek to understand the actual effectiveness of JCC to promote the wellbeing of workers. However, available literature on the notion of JCC, particularly in the tea sector in Malawi, lacks detailed information on the actual strength and weaknesses regarding JCC practices in the promotion of employee welfare. As such, it becomes overwhelmingly necessary to explore thoroughly the JCC practices in terms of strength and weaknesses. This study, therefore, was purposed to evaluate the role that JCC plays in the promotion of employee welfare in tea industry. The study had set three specific objectives. First, was to evaluate JCC ability/power to influence management decisions to the advantage of employees. Second, was to explore how JCC practices were managed in the tea industry for the benefit of employees. Finally was to examine the effectiveness of consultation process between management and JCC on matters affecting employees. The study used qualitative method. Three (3) Human Resources Managers were purposefully sampled to provide qualitative data through one to one interviews. Additionally, fifteen (15) JCC members were conveniently sampled to also provide qualitative data through one to one interviews. Finally, sixty (60) workers not in JCC membership were conveniently sampled to provide qualitative data through staged Focus Group Discussions. The study data were qualitatively analysed using thematic and content analysis. The results revealed that JCC was a useful forum for communication between management and employees that significantly contributed to industrial peace in the tea estates. However, JCC was found to be less effective employee voice mechanism to promote employees welfare, largely due to management persistent threats and dominance towards JCC practices and lack of legal framework to legitimise JCC actions. It was also found that the role of JCC, in relation to promotion of employee welfare, was deficient of real substance of what it takes for any effective employee voice to possess. In view of this, it was recommended that legal framework should be put in place to support JCC practices; Management should create enabling working environment for JCC to function; JCC to be fully capacitated; appropriate and effective communication channels be in place between management and JCC members and between JCC members and workers and last, was to enhance JCC regular meetings and frequent monitoring by relevant regulatory stakeholders.

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ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

JCC- Joint Consultative Committee

ILO- International Labour Organisation

PAWU- Planters Agriculture Workers Union

SPSS- Statistical Package for Social Sciences

FGD- Focused Group Discussion

HRM- Human Resources Manager

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The concept of Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) is not a new phenomenon. Its historical perspective dates way back to between 1917 and 1918 when Whitley Committee in the United Kingdom recommended for the establishment of JCCs in the workplaces as a solution to the endemic industrial occurrences during that time (Farnham, 2000). Barry et al (2018) adds that the surfacing of JCCs or often known as employee forum, were an act of welfare capitalist movements who had wanted to preserve market economy by vigorously inculcating industrial democracy. Essentially, as Barry et al (2018) put it, JCCs were meant to strengthen management –employee relationships and not to replace collective bargaining mostly done by unions and also management led approaches often through Human Resources Practices.

JCCs are defined as committees of managers and employees at the workplace that are primarily concerned with consultation rather than negotiation (Kersley, et al, 2000). A more comprehensive definition of a JCC is provided by Marchington (1992, p.1) who describes it as ‘A mechanism for managers and employees representatives to meet on regular basis in order to exchange views to utilise member’s knowledge and expertise and to deal with matters of common interest which is not a subject of collective bargaining’.

Research on JCC abroad has indicated that it is the most preferred indirect participation mechanism of workers representation in United Kingdom and other English speaking countries such as Australia, New Zealand and United States of America (Heller; Pusic; Strauss; Wilpert, 1998; Parasuraman & Jones, 2006). In the Malawi context, the concept of JCC is linked to the industrial unrest that characterised many workplaces between 1992 and 1993. Dzimbiri (2005) notes that the wave of strikes exposed the magnitude to which a communication gap had existed between employers and employees in many workplaces. Following an organised round table conference in August, 1993 by the Malawi Government, ‘an appeal was made to organisations and companies to form JCC to aid amicable resolve of employee grievances through consultation and dialogue’ (Dzimbiri, 2005 p. 69). It is stressed that numerous problems regarding workers grievances at the workplace are resolved through dialogue and consultation between employers and employees (ILO, 2006).The formation of JCC, therefore, was later embraced by Ministry of

Labour and advocated for all non-unionised workplaces to form JCC as a stop gap measure for enhancing consultative process between management and employees in order to minimise friction and misunderstanding between them (Ministry of Labour, 1998). According to the Ministry of Labour, JCC constitution document of Ref.No. 3/12/1/Vol.II of 1998, the Key functions of JCC involve advisory and consultative role on issues such as; reviewing the organisation performance; soliciting opportunities for improving organisation work and productivity; enhancing safety and welfare of employees; ensuring sound grievance handling procedures and disciplinary code as well as pecuniary and other conditions of service. As confirmed by Malawi Carer (2008), most of the tea estates in Malawi are still using JCC as a mechanism of employee participation that facilitates consultative process between employees and management. Ab Rahman; Ibrahim and Hussin (2015) assert that employee participation enhances the quality of decision making by broadening inputs; promotes commitment to the outcomes and improves motivation, co-operation and communication in the workplaces. The work councils which are similar to JCC structure have proved to be the most effective form of workers representation in Europe for information and consultation purposes (Markey, 2001; Goodijk, 2010). JCC helps to reduce industrial actions and provides an avenue for employee to express their views (Okpu & Jaja, 2014). Some studies done by Parasuraman (2007) in some Malaysian private Companies of POSCO and STEELCO have indicated that JCC could be applied effectively in an organisation and the end result would be business success. To the contrary, however, some studies in other organisations reveal that JCC is less effective to promote the welfare of workers being represented. For instance, studies done by Parasuraman ; Ab Rahman and Rathakrishan (2012) at the University of Malaysia and at AUTOCO in 2007 showed that JCCs were less effective to have control on the final decision on matters that affected workers as everything rested in the hands of management (Parasuraman, 2007). Similar studies done in Australia by Pyman; HollandCooper and Theither (2009) established that the effectiveness of JCC to promote employee welfare declined with time owing to perceived monopoly control of JCC by management (Haynes, Boxall, Macky, 2005). However, studies done by Okpu and Jaja (2014) in the Nigerian Banking Industry established that the use of JCC as a form of employee Voice mechanism had contributed to a high level of workers effective commitment to their organisation.

In the context of Tea Industry in Malawi, Malawi Carer (2008) concludes that the structures of JCC are very weak and lack both independence and transparency so much that membership is

based on loyalty of an individual towards management. Although a memorandum of recognition and access agreement between Tea Association of Malawi and Planters Agricultural Workers Union (PAWU) was signed, the trade union remains very weak to advance workers freedom of association and collective bargaining rights (Malawi Carer, 2008). As claimed by Malawi Carer (2008), JCC has diffused the power of Trade Union (PAWU) so much that the existence of it in the tea sector is just on paper and all estates in Malawi continue to use JCC as bridge between management and employee. However, the conclusions advanced by Malawi Carer on the status of JCC in the tea sector were not resulting from deeper studies with empirical analysis primarily focusing on the activities of JCC. The study by Malawi Carer had focused on assessing the social, economic and environmental conditions in the tea sector in Malawi in general terms. Thus it was too broad in scope to clearly bring up specific positive contributions and shortcomings of JCC towards promotion of employee welfare in the context of tea sector in Malawi. It was felt necessary, therefore, to have thorough, systematic and focused studies to evaluate the role of JCC on the promotion of employee welfare in the context of tea industry as JCC happens to be a preferred indirect employee participation mechanism than Union (Malawi Carer, 2008). Knowing both strengths and weaknesses of the JCC practices in the tea sector of Thyolo district were instrumental in the suggestions of balanced recommendations on how JCC could be used effectively to provide meaningful employee voice mechanism and employee participation in decision making on all affairs that affect workers. Additionally, the findings provided information that attempted to fill the existing literature gap considering that very little had been researched and documented in this area, taking into account that tea is one of the largest employers of labour in the district of Thyolo which contributes remarkably to the socio economic status of the district. Srinivasan (2016) asserts that tea is the most preferable beverage by millions across the globe which employs large workforce. In Malawi, the tea industry is very significant to the economy as it happens to be the second largest export earner after tobacco and accounts for eight percent (8%) export earnings and also employs 40, 000 to 50,000 of the labour force (Fair Trade Foundation, 2010). Malawi is the second largest tea producer in Africa after Kenya as it produces over ten percent (10%) of African tea (Malawi Carer, 2008).

Due to importance of the tea industry to the economy of Malawi realised through export earnings generation and employment creation, it becomes necessary that a study is done focusing on the management of employees as key stakeholders that contribute to the success of the industry. The ILO (1966) Survey report revealed the inferior and poor working conditions that are endured by

plantation workers. The ILO (2005) report bemoans the sad plight that characterises tea workers across all tea producing countries. Thus the tea industry in Malawi is not exceptional to this predicament of workers experiencing below standard working conditions. Report by Malawi Carer (2008) reveals sad working conditions among tea estates in Mulanje and Thyolo, which are the main tea growing districts in Malawi. There are no effective trade unions that could effectively bargain for the improved welfare of workers (Malawi Carer, 2008). The tea industry is very reluctant to accept and recognise the trade union in tea estates so much that the existence of trade union in the tea sector is on paper and in practice; tea estates continue to use Joint Consultative Committees (JCC) as a bridge between management and employees (Malawi Carer, 2008). However, Barry et al (2018) advance that the existence of two forms of representation, that is, JCC and Union are supposed to be compliments and not substitutes.

The choice of Joint Consultative Committees (JCC) by the tea industry as a preferred indirect employee participation mechanism necessitated a study to establish whether or not this voice mechanism plays any role towards promoting the welfare of employees in the tea estates. Ab Rahman, et al (2015) observe that understanding effectiveness of a Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) is critical in order to establish its relevancy and position it at its primary place on matters of using it as a platform for employee voice

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The JCC as a preferred and commonly used employee voice mechanism both locally and abroad ought to have been given considerable research attention that assesses its effectiveness and suggests best ideas on how it could be applied in industrial relations circles to benefit the wellbeing of both employees and the organisations. The continued use of JCC at the expense of trade union in the tea industry in Malawi (Malawi Carer, 2008) should have ignited more research interest considering the significance of the sector to the economy of the country (Fair trade, 2010) and the industrial relations concerns that had been cropping up in the sector (Malawi Carer, 2008).

However, some research works relating to how effective JCC enhances employee welfare were done in Anglo-Saxon countries such as United Kingdom, United States and Australia (Markey, 2010 & Goodijk, 2010). But these were done in other industries than tea. Other studies were done in Malaysia on indirect employee participation with reference to JCC effectiveness towards

promoting employee wellbeing by Parasuraman et al (2012) but these were done in public sector like University of Malaysia which offered a different context than the tea industry which was the focus of this research. Furthermore, it can be noted that most of these studies were based on western culture (Parasuraman & Jones, 2006; Goodijk, 2010; Kongiannou, 2013) which presents a different scenario than the tea industry under focus in Malawi. Several studies were done in the tea industry most of them focusing on general conditions of workers and trade Unions in India, Srilanka and Kenya and less attention has been given to JCC (Srinivasan, 2016).

In the context of Malawi tea industry, the Malawi Carer (2008) research work had focused on general social, economic and environmental problems facing the tea industry and highlighted about JCC as a commonly used employee voice mechanism which was said to be weak. However, the paper could not present in detail the actual weaknesses of the JCC and the contributions or strength that would be capitalised when suggesting for remedies for improving JCC to become more relevant form of employee voice mechanism that surely promotes employee welfare. It was thus imperative that a well-focused and systematic research was done to bridge up the wide existing information gap on the notion of JCC in the tea sector, hence the intention to undertake this research that looked at the role of JCC in the promotion of employee welfare in the tea industry.

1.3 Purpose and Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study was to evaluate the role Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) plays in promoting the welfare of employees in the tea industry of Thyolo district.

1.4 Specific Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study were:-

- i.** To establish how JCCs are managed for the benefit of employees in the tea industry in Thyolo district.
- ii.** To examine the consultation process between management and JCC on matters that affect employees in the tea industry in Thyolo district.
- iii.** To evaluate the ability of JCC to influence management decisions for the benefit of employees in the tea industry in Thyolo district.

1.5 Specific Research Questions

In order to address the thesis specific objectives, the following were the research questions to be answered.

- i.** How are the JCC practices managed for the benefit of employees in the tea industry in Thyolo district?

- ii.** How effective are the consultation processes between JCC and management to address welfare matters that affect employees in the Tea industry in Thyolo district?

- iii.** What is the JCC's ability to influence management decision for the benefit of employees in the tea industry in Thyolo district?

1.6 The Significance of the Study

The tea industry is very important to the economy of Malawi as it accounts for eight percent (8%) of export earnings and employs about fifty thousand (50, 000) of the labour force (Fair Trade foundation, 2010). The Planters Agricultural Workers Union (PAWU) is very weak to represent the interest of workers and the tea industry uses JCC as indirect employee participation mechanism (Malawi Carer, 2008). The available literature on the notion of JCC particularly in the tea industry in Malawi falls short of detailed information on the strength and weaknesses of JCC practices (Malawi Carer, 2008). Lack of this information in the industrial relations circles puts a vacuum on the direction as to how JCC could be improved in order to become an effective employee voice mechanism. Therefore, this study that evaluates the role JCC plays in the promotion of employee welfare in the tea industry in Thyolo district is very significant in the sense that the findings are going to fill this information vacuum. Additionally, the findings are going to add information value to the existing body of knowledge from which policymakers and other interested stakeholders may wish to tap when planning for employee welfare issues and JCC as an indirect employee participation mechanism. The information generated from this study is likely to trigger more future researches around best practices for promoting employee welfare in the tea sector and other organisations using JCC model, based on the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

1.7 Chapter Summary

The first chapter of this study has presented the general background information by among others discussing the JCC concept and its historical perspective from abroad to local. The chapter has also outlined the research objectives; Research questions; Problem statement; Study significance and study limitation. Coming next is chapter two which presents a review of literature pertaining to JCC and employee welfare.

1.8 The Organisation of the Study

The thesis has been arranged into five main chapters. Chapter one presents the study background information as well as the problem statement, research objectives, research questions and the significance of the study. Chapter two gives an account of literature review with a specific focus on JCC historical development and relevant JCC concepts. It also presents the review of welfare concept. Chapter three presents the research design and methodology used in the study. In particular, the study location, target population, sampling techniques, research instruments and data sampling techniques, are also presented in the chapter. Chapter four presents and discusses research findings and/ or research results. Chapter five, the last chapter, presents the summary of research findings, study conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The chapter two of the study looks at the relevant documented literature regarding JCC and employee welfare. It starts by highlighting JCC historical perspective from international to local perspective. It discusses the role of JCC on employee welfare promotion as articulated by some writers and further presents the JCC components and models as advanced by Marchington in relation to JCC guidelines. Finally, the chapter looks at the review of employee welfare concept.

2.2 The JCC Concept

The subject of JCC has aroused a remarkable degree of interest from among researchers and academic writers (Parasuraman, 2009). Forsyth et al (2006) presented a broad definition of JCC as to include a multiplicity of practical mechanisms for consultation. A comprehensive definition of JCC was given by Marchington (1992, p. 1) as quoted by Parasuraman and Jones (2006) that it is “A mechanism for managers and employees representatives to meet on regular basis in order to exchange views to utilise members knowledge and expertise, and to deal with matters of common interest which are not the subject of Collective Bargaining”. In the industrial relations context, JCC is taken as a form of indirect participation mechanism (Parasuraman & Jones, 2006). Dundon et al (2002) recognises JCC as one of the employee voice mechanisms that would mutually keep both the employees and the organisations viable. Ab Rahman (2015) observes that JCC is deemed as the most suitable indirect participation mechanism that would be used to promote employee engagement in an organisation.

Most of the countries including UK and other English speaking countries like US, Australia, New Zealand use JCC as the most desirable form of employee indirect participation mechanism (Parasuraman & Jones, 2006). Since the introduction of JCC in Britain, following a Whitley Committee recommendation in the 19th century (Farnham, 2000; Edwards, 2003 as cited in Edwards (2003), this form of employee voice mechanism has been practiced in many other world countries in the industrial relations circles. However, as observed by Markey (2001) JCC varies from country to country in terms of composition, operations, power and jurisdiction.

In the context of Malawi, the Labour Relations Act (1996) provides for freedom of association, the right to organise and collective bargaining as also stipulated in the International Labour Conventions number 87 and 98 both of which were ratified by Malawi Government. However, the Labour Relations Act (1996) recognises only the unions as a form of employee voice mechanism in Malawi. It follows that JCCs do not enjoy any legal backing in any of the labour legislations in Malawi. The Malawi Government, through Ministry of Labour, has encouraged the formation of JCCs in workplaces where unions are not existing as a stop gap measure to promote consultation and dialogue between management and employees to minimise frictions and misunderstanding (Ministry of Labour, 1998).

The tea industry in Malawi continues to use JCC as a form of employee voice mechanism despite the existence of union activities in some tea estates which are described as generally weak to represent the interest of workers effectively (Malawi Carer, 2008).

2.2.1 The Role of JCC Toward Employee Welfare Promotion

JCC, as form of indirect employee participation mechanism plays a critical role in the field of industrial and employment relations. Parasuraman et al (2012, p. 4) asserts that ‘ JCCs function to create a well balanced management –employee relationship and provide platform for employees to voice up their concerns on certain issues in order to create a harmonious working environment’. There is overwhelming evidence in the literature that employee participation mechanism, of which JCC is part, helps to enhance the quality of decision making as there is exchange of ideas from a wider spectrum and also fosters staff motivation, cooperation and opens channels of communication in the workplace (Markey, 2005). The presence of JCC makes a remarkable contribution towards improved employment relations from a general perspective (Markey, 2005) and enables staff to exchange skills (Markey, 1997). As added by Okpu and Jaja (2014) JCC helps to minimise the occurrences of industrial disputes and provides platform for employees to express their views. An organisation with a JCC in place, as asserted by Rose (2002), is likely to attain an increased employee satisfaction thereby leading to an improved organisational productivity (Sinha, 2013). JCC plays an advisory role to the management and can ably influence decision making on certain issues (Parasuraman & Jones, 2006). According to Markey (2001), JCC can extend the sphere of influence over several matters such as industrial relations, safety, investment policy, conditions of service and grievance handling procedures. Additionally, JCCs can also deal with issues to do with organisational restructuring, mergers and

acquisitions (Parasuraman & Jones, 2006). In fact, Barry et al (2018) assert that the presence of JCC with or without unionisation, impart a significant advantage in organisational and employee outcomes as compared to firms with no representation of any sort.

However, there are different perceptions as regards to how JCC functions. According to Marchington (1992), JCC is valued as a meaningful form of indirect employee participation by both managers and employees. Hyman and Mason (1995) as quoted by Parasuraman and Jones (2006) observe that JCC can either be monopolised by management or can perform a noble role of influencing organisation decisions for the employee's advantage. The control theory propounded by Ramsay (1990) sees JCCs as tools in the hands of management used to suppress the union influences. It is thus very hard for workers to reap the benefits of a JCC even in a unionised set up if the organisation is for a control versus commitment policy (Barry et al, 2018). JCCs are said to be initiated by management (Parasuraman et al, 2012) as such, they act as rubber stamp mechanisms for management and their main attention is on trivial matters such as tea and toilet (Beardwell & Holden, 2001). However, Ab Rahman et al (2015, p. 20) observes that JCCs are regarded as the "most appropriate indirect participation mechanism that can be used to enhance employee engagement in an organisation".

In line with Strauss (1998), indirect participation mechanism such as JCCs are seen as necessary because they represent the majority of employees in an organisation who are affected by high level decisions and as noted by Ab Rahman et al (2015), the strategic direction of any organisations is determined by the actions and beliefs of the employees, hence necessitating consultations with employee representatives (JCC) when making critical high level decisions for the organisation.

Some studies have been done to assess whether JCC effectively accorded employees genuine power and engagement in decision making in some countries like Malaysia and Australia. At POSCO and STEEL CO in Malaysia, for instance, JCC was a success story and at AUTOCO in the same country, JCC was a failure (Parasuraman, 2007). Similarly, studies done at the University of Malaysia found that JCC was not effective (Parasuraman et al, 2012). Further studies done in Australia by Pyman et al (2009) revealed that JCCs were ineffective according to employees' perceptions. Studies done by Okpu and Jaja (2014) in the banking industry of Nigeria revealed that JCC was instrumental in motivating employees to feel part and parcel of the organisation. In the context of tea industry in Malawi, Malawi Carer (2008) commented that JCC

was generally weak to represent the interests of workers. However, Ab Rahman et al (2015, p. 22) concluded that the effectiveness of JCC would vary in an organisation ‘‘depending on the selected mix of the primary components’’ as put forward by Marchington (1992).

2.2.2 Malawi JCC Guidelines and Marchington JCC Components and Models

JCC started surfacing in Malawi after an organised round table conference by Malawi Government in August, 1993 after which an appeal was made to organisations to have an employee participation mechanism in form of JCC (Zimbiri, 2005). Although JCCs in Malawi have formal powers provided by Ministry of Labour, there is no constitutional basis or legislation to regulate JCC as is the case with Unions (Labour Relations Act, 1996). However, Ministry of Labour developed some guidelines contained in a document Ref.No.3/12/1Vol.II/98 to guide the formation and operations of JCCs in workplaces. Since these are not binding rules, organisations are at liberty to manage their JCCs in a manner deemed necessary to their aspirations. Marchington (1994) postulates that there are five primary components regarding JCCs. The five primary components, according to Ab Rahman et al (2015) includes; Power, Subject matter, Membership, Objective and Consultation. Ab Rahman et al (2015) adds that for any JCC to be effective, the primary components must correspond and relate with one another. The Model is as illustrated below..

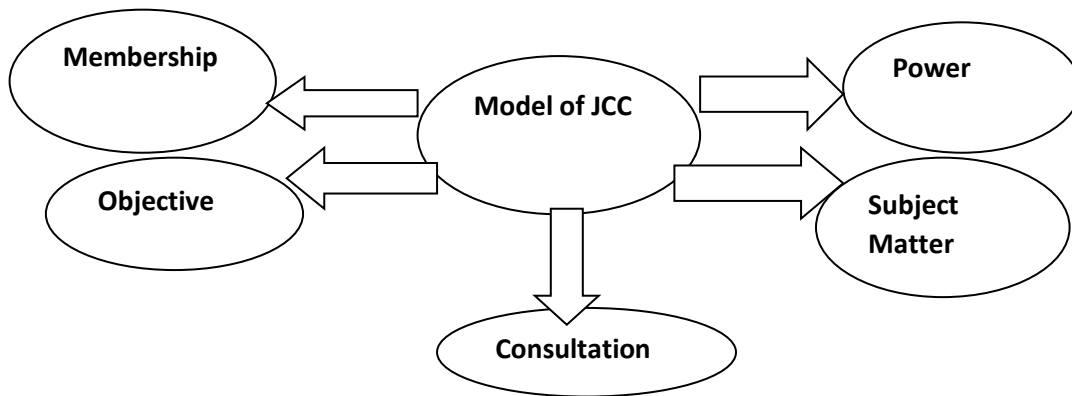


Fig2. 1: Marchington 1992 Models of JCC

The five primary components in Fig.2.1 will be briefly examined in relation to Malawi JCC guidelines document as prescribed by Ministry of Labour.

2.2.3 Objective Of JCC

According to Marchington (1994), the first primary component is the objective of JCC which ought to be clearly written in the constitution, providing for improvement of productivity and efficiency and fully engaging the employees in the decision making process of the organisation. However, Goodijk (2010) argues that the objective of the organisation will largely depend on the aspirations of the organisation, implying that the objectives may vary from one organisation to another. The Malawi JCC guidelines by the Ministry of Labour (1998, p.1) provides for a JCC objective which is ‘to provide a means of consultation between management and employees in order to prevent friction and misunderstanding and secure the fullest measure of cooperation for the maintenance of satisfactory Labour relations and for the improvement of productivity’.

2.2.4 Subject Matter of JCC

The second primary component of JCC is the subject matter which essentially is the focus of a JCC meeting. Parasuraman (2012) asserts that the subject matter, as a primary component of a JCC, is critical if organisations are to enhance level of productivity and quality of decision making process between management and JCC. The subject under JCC discussions might range from less important issues such as social and welfare activities, toilet, food, and parking to very important strategic issues such as investment plans and business projections (Markey, 2010). However, the Malawi JCC guidelines document specifies the scope of the subjects over which JCC can exercise advisory and consultative role as to include organisation performance, productivity, safety, health and welfare of employees, grievance handling procedures and organisation disciplinary code and other conditions of service (Ministry of Labour, 1998).

2.2.5 Consultation Process of JCC

The third primary component of a JCC is the consultation process. Parasuraman (2006) acknowledges that different organisations have different ways of conveying information which can either take upward or downward trend. Marchington (1992) differentiates the objectives between upward and downward flow of information. While upward flow of information is intended to solicit ideas from the employees, the downward flow of communication is intended to convince employees to embrace what is being advanced by management (Marchington, 1992).

The Malawi JCC guidelines by Ministry of Labour (1998) provides consultation process through regular meetings or submission of a request on some urgent matter by any two members of either party (JCC or Management) thus providing for both upward and downward flow of information.

2.2.6 Power of JCC

The fourth component of JCC is the issue of power. Parasuraman et al (2012) states that the power of JCC depends on how it has been defined in the constitution. Well defined and explicit JCC power acts as a reference point when expressing employee voice (Marchington, 1992). However, Markey (2007) indicates that JCCs are characterised by a number of limitations, ranging from playing purely advisory role, handling narrow range of issues to lacking collective bargaining rights, because of absence of legal backing. Although the Malawi JCC guideline document provides the scope of issues on which JCC can have advisory and consultative role, in some instances, with the involvement of Ministry of Labour (Ministry of Labour, 1998), there is no legal backing for JCC like what is being enjoyed by Unions (Labour Relations Act, 1996).

2.2.7 Membership of JCC

The fifth primary component of JCC is the membership. Parasuraman et al (2012) point out that membership composition of JCC is very critical as it ensures that members become committed to the principle of consultation. Markey (2001) explains the composition of JCC as comprising 50:50 mixes of management and employees or union representatives. The Malawi JCC guidelines document provides that membership of the JCC shall consist elected representatives with fair and balanced representation of the activities of the organisation and the nominated members of management who shall not exceed the representation of employee members.

2.3 JCC Models of Consultation

There are further four JCC models of consultation in relation to Collective Bargaining (CB) propounded by Marchington (1994) that have discourse in the industrial relations literature (Parasuraman & Jones, 2006). These will briefly be looked at in the few subsequent paragraphs.

2.3.1 Alternative Model

According to Marchington (1994) the first model postulates that JCCs are regarded as absolute alternative to collective bargaining. The basic understanding is that JCCs are put in place to counter any elements of Collective Bargaining and the purpose of consultation is merely to provide room for employees to present their views to management and for the management to relay information to their employees. The preference of JCC over Unions in the tea industry is

speculated to be a strategy to counter the threats posed by the penetration of trade unions to the industry (Malawi Carer, 2008). Parasuraman and Jones (2006) confirms that this JCC model weakens the power and influence of unions on the workplace decision making process and the very objective of employers in establishing this model is to undermine the value and dependence of workers on unions.

2.3.2 Marginal Model

The next JCC consultation model puts JCCs to the peripherals or marginal spheres of collective bargaining (Marchington, 1994). Under this model, minimum influence of JCCs is felt on workers and management and not much mutual gains are realised in the process as there is a lot of informality and lack of seriousness in the manner things are handled (Parasuraman & Jones, 2006). Malawi Carer (2008) studies in the tea industry in Malawi presents an impression that JCCs are marginal to Collective Bargaining with manifested weaknesses that offer less hope as employee voice mechanism.

2.3.3 Competing Model

Marchington (1994) describes the third JCC consultation model as the competing model which regards JCC as a direct competitor to collective bargaining. Under this model, the consultation machinery is at least raised to be at par with negotiation structures of collective bargaining. The whole essence of the model is to neutralise possible competitive friction and enhance cooperation between employees and/or JCCs on one hand and management on the other hand. Parasuraman and Jones (2006) confirm that employers put in place this model principally to undermine the powers of unions in a workplace. The Malawi Carer (2008) studies in the tea industry in Malawi acknowledges that the use of JCC by tea estates has diffused the power of union and reduced it to be merely on paper and dead in action.

2.3.4 Adjunct Model

The final JCC consultation model, according to Marchington (1994) sees JCC as adjunct to collective bargaining. Under this model, the roles of JCCs and collective bargaining are said to have an integrative relationship to the extent that, despite performing different roles, mutual cooperation between management and employees is successfully achieved. The Malawi JCC guidelines provide for consultative and advisory role on specific issues (Ministry of Labour, 1998) and the collective bargaining is stipulated as a union role (Labour Relations, Act, 1996).

However, the Ministry of Labour does not encourage the establishment of JCCs where unions exist. It follows that where there are JCCs, collective bargaining role would be missing unless JCCs are given such powers by a particular organisation to bargain.

Although these Marchington JCC models have been extensively used by various scholars in industrial relations discourse, they have faced some criticisms which could be considered here as emerging issues that required special attention in this study. Ab Rahman et al (2015) observes four areas that have been critiqued by some scholars. In the first place, the JCC models are said to have been developed particularly for western setting (Parasuraman, 2007; Markey, 2009). Thus they may not be compatible in all aspects with other environments different from western environment. This study was done in Malawi with a pattern of environment different from western pattern. The next emerging issue, according to Ab Rahman, et al (2015), is that JCC model has its originality traced to Whitley committee (Farnham, 2000) with high influence of bureaucratic administration systems from the British Administration. Although this study was done in Malawi which is equally influenced by British administration systems, the target of the study was the tea industry which was a private sector. The private sector might have a different context of administration systems from that which is common in government institutions. Another emerging issue as observed by Ab Rahman, et al (2015) is that JCC models are universally accepted hence shaped with global knowledge which might not fit well in local cultural constructs. Finally, Ab Rahman et al (2015) observes that although some scholars have attempted to tackle the cultural aspect of JCC, it has not been thoroughly and adequately addressed to become workable in every cultural context. This research, therefore, took into account these emerging issues and attempted to put them into perspective of the research objectives.

2.4 Employee Welfare Concept

The notion of employee welfare is critical in any organisations as it affects the operations of organisation business in one way or another. It is a known fact that organisations have of late, experienced significant changes in the pattern of behaviours of employees owing to globalisation and technological influences, as such; the organisation focus is now on improving employee welfare than ever before (Anusha & Srilakshminarayana, 2013). Rajkuar (2014) emphasises the need to take care of the employees by providing them with both statutory and non statutory facilities in order to add stimulus that would keep their body and mind together to sustain their

satisfaction. Sinha (2013) notes that staff welfare and their level of satisfaction and engagement has been found to directly improve performance and organisation success.

The term welfare, according to Sabarirajan, Meharajan & Arun (2010 p.15) can be defined as the ‘desirable state of existence involving the mental, physical, moral and emotional factor of a person’. From this definition, welfare implies wholesomeness of the human being (Sabarirajan et al, 2010) in relation to the total environment, socially, economically and ecologically (Srinivas,2013). Employee welfare is regarded as an important fact of industrial relations (Meena & Dangayah, 2012) and acts as key to enhancing employer –employee relations (Sabarirajan et al, 2010). Enhancing employee welfare entails providing reasonable access to various facilities, services and amenities for improvement of their health, efficiency, economic betterment and social status (Srinivas, 2013). According to Sabarirajan et al. (2010) the quality of life and the productivity of employer can be enhanced by provision of major qualitative dimensions of employment that include, social security benefits, safe and humane conditions of work and adequate levels of earnings. The industrial relations literature indicates that the employee welfare measures do not only improve quality of work life but also positively impact on employee satisfaction, behaviour and performance (Meena & Dangayah, 2012; Sabarirajan et al. 2010). Some organisations use provision of employee welfare as a retention strategy against competition from surrounding companies that threaten to attract employees (Sabarirajan et al. 2010). Anusha and Srilakshminarayana (2013) observe that employee welfare is dynamic and viewed differently from among countries. Sabarirajan et al. (2010, p.16) adds that employee welfare and quality of work life are treated differently by different countries depending on ‘economic development, political out-look and social philosophy’. The 26thInternational labour Conference held in Philadelphia came up with recommendations on welfare measures to include aspects such as; provision of housing and facilities for recreation and culture; provision of adequate nutrition, maternity protection and child welfare, adequate protection for life and health of workers, educational and vocational opportunities (Simpson, 1944). Sabarirajan et al. (2010) observes that in any organised sector of economy, an institution mechanism is put in place to make sure that employee welfare measures are provided as designed. The JCC is one of the employee voice mechanisms intended to safeguard the interest of workers and promote their welfare in an organisation (Ab Rahman, 2015). The Malawi JCC guidelines document point out that JCC will have an advisory and consultative role among others, on safety, health and welfare of employees

(Ministry of Labour, 1998). JCC, as an employee voice mechanism is widely used in the Tea industry in Malawi (Malawi Carer, 2008). However, studies on general plantation workers by ILO (1966) revealed that workers in plantations are faced by inferior and poor working conditions (Lincoln, 2010). The tea industry, being one of the plantation industries in Malawi is not exceptional to this. Studies done by Malawi Carer (2008) in the tea industry in Malawi point out that plantations/estates owners exploit workers, subject workers to poor working environments, poor housing, fail to provide protective wears, subject workers to poor sanitations , unfair dismissals , nonpayment of wages and terminal dues, among others. The Plantation Convention number 110 (1958), ratified by some countries including Malawi was put in place to regulate working conditions in the plantation economy. The unimpressive employee welfare status apparently reported from tea estates in Malawi (Malawi Carer, 2008), suggests that the employee voice mechanism (JCC) used in the estates is not effective to promote employee welfare. The studies by Malawi Carer (2008) only managed to highlight the dominant existence of JCC in the tea sector and concluded that it was a weak structure. However, studies failed to bring on the surface the specific strength and weaknesses of the JCC which would be essential for figuring out means for improving the voice mechanism structure. It is, therefore, in the interest of this research to establish, with empirical evidence, to address the gap by evaluating the role JCC play toward promotion of employee welfare in the tea industry, with a particular focus on assessing its strength and limitations.

2.5 Chapter Summary

The chapter has presented a review of relevant literature on JCC and welfare concept. It has highlighted the historical perspective of JCC both on international and local scene. The chapter has articulated the Marchington JCC components and models in relation to JCC guidelines as prescribed by Ministry of Labour document. It has transpired that for a JCC structure to meaningfully uplift employee welfare, the five primary components must coordinate each other in such a way that the JCC ought to be guided by explicit and publishable objectives that favour it; discusses with management a variety of welfare subject matters including issues of strategic importance; has powers to influence decision making process on all issues; enjoys a two way consultation/ communication process that mutually benefit both management and JCC and has well balanced representation that is numerically equal or exceeds management at every consultation. Additionally, of the four highlighted JCC consultation models that impact on collective bargaining, the adjunct model has the highest potential to enhance employee welfare as

opposed to marginal model which is one of those with the least potential. The next is chapter three which is the research methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the methodology that was used to conduct the study. The chapter presents the research design, the location of the study, target population, sampling techniques, research instruments, data collection techniques and how the data were analysed.

3.2 Research Design

The research design used in this study was explanatory and descriptive. Kombo & Tromp (2006) assert that qualitative approach is a form of research that involves description. The study aimed at collecting information from subjects on their attitudes and opinions in relation to the role of JCC in promoting the employee welfare in the tea industry and to explain the general practices of JCC in terms of strength and limitations towards promoting employee welfare in the tea industry.

The research approach is qualitative. The nature of the study required an approach that is flexible in order to have deeper investigations on the role of JCC on the promotion of employee welfare and its strength and weaknesses as conceptualised by research participants, hence the choice of qualitative approach. Saunders; Lews and Thomhill (2009) describe qualitative data analysis as containing exploratory element that includes non-standardised data that would help to understand reasons for decisions or reasons for attitudes or opinions based on conceptualisation. In this context, the facts on reasons, opinions and comments made by respondents as regards the extent to which JCC promotes employees welfare in the tea industry were measured qualitatively.

The study used primary data collected through unstructured interviews and secondary data which were obtained from already existing information such as text books, JCC minutes and journals articles.

3.3 Location of the Study

The study was carried out at Naming'omba tea estates, Satemwa tea estates and Ntchima tea estates, all of which are located in Thyolo district, Malawi. The selected tea estates of Naming'omba, Satemwa and Ntchima were purposively sampled because, according to Thyolo District Labour Office report of 2015, these tea estates happened to be some of the oldest tea

estates in the district where activities of JCC had been practiced over long period of time hence, were able to elicit reliable information regarding JCC practices and employee welfare. Additionally, the choice of three estates owned by different proprietors was for comparison purposes so that valid information was yielded.

3.4 Target Population

Out of the estimated workforce for the selected tea estates, namely; Naming’omba (2,642), Satemwa (2,700) and Ntchima (5,000), the main Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) membership comprised 15 members for Naming’omba, 19 members for Satemwa and 20 members for Ntchima estates. Thus five (5) main Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) members were drawn from each estate, such as; Naming’omba (5) Satemwa (5) and Ntchima (5), to participate in the research as key informants. 20 workers not in the main JCC membership were drawn from each of the three (3) targeted estates to provide research information on behalf of the entire workforce being represented by the main JCC. One (1) Human Resources Officer was drawn from each of the three targeted estates for purposes of representing the side of management. Thus the sample size was 78 participants.

Table 3. 1: Study participants

S/N	Estates	JCC Members Targeted	Workers not in JCC Membership	HRM Officers	TOTAL
1.	Satemwa	5	20	1	
2.	Naming’omba	5	20	1	
3.	Ntchima	5	20	1	
	TOTAL	15	60	3	78

As it can be seen in table 3.1 above, seventy eight participants took part in research project.

3.5 Sampling Techniques

The study used non probability sampling techniques to select the subjects. For instance, the study used judgemental sample to select Human Resources officers who had expertise and technical know-how to provide industrial relations information relating to JCC and welfare of employees. Saunders, et al (2009) define the process of judgemental sampling as an action whereby a researcher uses his/her judgement to select population members who are good prospects for accurate information and representative of the targeted population. The study further used convenience sample to select main Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) members and workers not in the main JCC committee membership, who conveniently provided the required information relating to JCC and welfare of employees. Convenience sampling, as Saunders et al (2009) explain, involves the selection of the easiest to access population members by the researcher for inclusion in a sample from which to obtain information.

3.6 Data Collection instruments and Techniques

The study used unstructured interviews for the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) members and Human Resources Officers. The study also used Focused Group Discussions for workers not in the main JCC membership, using unstructured or open ended questions as a guide. Focused Group Discussion (FGD) is said to be a discussion of six (6) to twelve (12) persons guided by a facilitator during which group members talk freely and spontaneously about a certain topic and the purpose is to obtain in depth information on concepts, perception and ideas of the group (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Targeting different categories of participants and using varying methods was for the purposes of triangulating the information. Greener (2008) postulates that triangulation is advantageous as it helps to enrich and confirm the picture of a situation a researcher is collecting information on and also provides a check on findings from a particular method. The unstructured interviews for Human Resources Officers were in English while the Chichewa translations were used for the main JCC members and workers not in the JCC membership because of illiteracy challenges. Interviews are said to be very useful research tool when it comes to exploring experiences, views, opinions, or beliefs of subjects on specific matters (Choo, Garro, Ranney, Melsel & Guthrie, 2015). In particular, as McLeod (2014) asserts, unstructured interviews have several advantages despite being time consuming and expensive. Among others, unstructured interviews are flexible as questions can be adapted and changed depending on the answer of respondents. Furthermore, they are able to generate adequate

qualitative data through use of questions which allow respondents to elicit deep insights using their own words while feeling relaxed and unassessed. Moreover, as McLeod (2014) puts it, unstructured interviews provide for increased validity as the interviewer has chance to probe for deeper understanding, asks clarifications and allows the interviewee steer the direction of the interview.

The study collected data from primary source through unstructured interviews and Focused Group Discussions. Kombo & Tromp (2005), advance that qualitative research relies much on a strategy that is flexible and interactive, which include interviewing and focused group discussions. Data from secondary source was collected through text books, journals and minutes of JCC meetings. In collecting primary data, the study used unstructured interviews for the three (3) Human Resources Officers, one (1) from each of the three (3) targeted estates. The unstructured interviews also were used when interviewing face to face the 15 main JCC members of which five (5) were drawn from each of the three (3) targeted estates, comprising both male and female participants. The Focused Group Discussion was used for sixty (60) workers who were not in the main JCC membership of which twenty (20) participants were drawn from each of the three (3) targeted estates, composed of both males and females. There were two (2) Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted at each of the three (3) estates. Each FGD comprised 10 (ten) participants, a mixture of both males and females. Neyman (2007) guides that, when using Focus Group Discussion, a homogeneous group members of 6 to 12 are interviewed informally and a researcher uses 4 to 6 separate groups. In line with these guidelines, this study had arranged 6 separate Focused Group Discussions each with 10 participants hence, 60 participants in total. Apart from note taking, recording devices were used to capture data during interviews and FGD. One (1) assistant facilitator was engaged during Focused Group Discussion exercise. The interview schedule was pretested to establish if the result of information required could effectively be obtained using designed questions. Tayie (2005) asserts that pretesting is the best way of assessing if the research instrument has been adequately designed and provides chance to correct some flaws so that time and resources are not wasted in using a wrong research instrument. The study sought consent from the informants and estate authorities where the study was conducted. The informants were assured of their confidentiality for every piece of information provided throughout the research exercise.

3.7 Data Analysis.

Data from recorded materials and notes taken were transcribed using condensation and categorisation methods. Condensation is a process in which a section of the text is abbreviated and made more manageable while maintaining the main content and ensuring important meaning is not distorted, while categorisation is the process of grouping codes of data according to similar categories (SBU, 2016). Data were then coded manually through notes formulation from the hard copy of transcription. Coding is a process of grouping interviewees' responses into categories that bring together similar opinions, ideas, themes and concepts that have been revealed by participants (Bryman & Bell, 2003). The coded data were then entered into a computer and arranged using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Greener (2008) confirms that Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for windows is the most commonly used tool to produce all statistical tests and analysis. The coded and arranged data were analysed using content and thematic analysis. Kombo & Tromp (2006), describe content analysis as a process that examines the intensity with which certain words have been used. Thus data gathered were categorised in themes and sub-themes so as to be able to be compared. Thematic analysis categorises related topics and identifies major concepts and themes under them (Kombo & Tromp, 2006).

3.8 Chapter Summary

The chapter has presented the research methodology by outlining its design; the study location; target population and sampling techniques. The chapter has further presented research instruments and techniques that were used in the data collection exercise. Finally, the chapter has explained how the data were analysed. In a nutshell, the study was done in three estates located in Thyolo district with a sample size of seventy eight (78) participants. The study was predominantly qualitative in nature and collected data through unstructured interviews and focus group discussions. In terms of analysis, thematic and content analysis were adopted. The next is chapter four which is about research findings and discussions.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and interprets the research findings with regard to study objectives. The study looks at management of JCC practices; the consultation process of JCC and the power of JCC. The research findings reflect opinions, comments and attitudes of seventy eight (78) research participants who were engaged in the research project. The participants were drawn from three tea estates, namely; Satemwa, Naming'omba and Ntchima. The participants were in the three categories of Joint Consultative Committee members, workers not in the Joint Consultative Committee membership and Human Resources Managers.

4.2 Management of JCC Practices

Under this theme, the research sought to establish whether or not the JCC practices were managed for the benefit of employee welfare. Various opinions, comments and attitudes were expressed by participants that provide a fair picture of how JCC practices were being managed.

4.2.1 Knowledge, Publicisation and Consideration of Workers'/Employers' Interests Regarding JCC Objectives

The JCC Model by Marchington emphasises the need to have written explicit JCC objectives in the constitution in order to induce employee commitment and productivity (Ab Rahman, 2015). Although documented JCC objectives in a form of constitution were not noted in all estates, the research participants demonstrated a fair knowledge of what ought to be JCC objectives. The knowledge was probably gained through awareness and orientation provided by District Labour Office when facilitating the establishment of JCCs and also through interactions among workers, JCC members and management. Here below are some of the comments by research participants regarding JCC objectives.

“...the objectives of the JCC are to look at work environment, how you engage management, represent employees before management and get views from both employees and management on how the management should assist us as JCC and how the company assists employees in terms of security, food, housing, funeral arrangements and welfare...”

(JCC member –RAMU, on 15th January, 2019)

“...normally what we do is that we hold meetings with the JCC members where JCC members and management representatives discuss, then after that meeting, JCC members are asked to go out to divisions and sensitise people and create awareness on what has been discussed at the main JCC gathering, normally that is how JCC objectives are taken to all stakeholders...”

(HRM Officer 2, on 25th January, 2019)

“...we have channel of communication between management and division managers who convey the message to employees in their respective divisions. Of course we also paste information on notice boards for the public to read and take note of what is needed...”

(HRM Officer 3, on 15th January, 2019)

“ ...JCC is a worker representative grouping established by Labour Office to serve workers on their needs from the company. It is there to provide checks and balances to the management to ensure that there are fair labour practices. The Labour Office told us that we need to take care of workers we represent. If the Company does not do well, we need to intervene. Thus we need to pinpoint the shortfalls throughout the chain of command and advise constructively, that is, from estate manager, divisional manager to Company...”

(JCC member-JADA, on 11th January, 2019)

The comments highlighted by some research participants above are indicative of the fact that to a fair extent, JCC objectives were known and understood by both management and workers/JCC. Although not documented in a form of constitution, the information regarding the same was ably shared through interactions between management and employees/JCC, between Labour Office and employees/JCC, as well as through notices on the boards.

However, of paramount importance was also an element as to whether or not, the implementation of JCC objectives balanced the interests of both the employers and workers. Many employers tend to use JCCs as rubber stamp bodies to advance their interests (Ab Rahman, 2015). Opinions on whether JCC objectives took on board the interests of both workers and employers were captured. The comments revealed that, while HRM Officers felt JCC objectives balanced the

interests of both employers and workers were taken on board, most of the JCC members, eleven (11) out of fifteen (15) felt JCC objectives were biased towards promoting the interests of the employer.

“...The role that JCC plays is that of coordination, so we make sure that JCC coordinates issues from both the management side and that of the workers side...”

(HRM Officer -2, on 25th January, 2019)

“...the objectives, I feel they are biased towards the interests of the company, it is only the company that is happy...”

(JCC member-SIJO, on 11th January, 2019)

In relation to the comments highlighted above, HRM Officers defended their role as employer representatives to suggest that both interests of the employers and employees were balanced in the implementation of JCC objectives. They were supported by four (4) out of fifteen (15) JCC members in their opinions. On the other hand, eleven (11) out of fifteen (15) JCC members were of the opinion that employers remained the key beneficiaries of the implementation of JCC objectives, at the expense of employees.

In summary, as regards the JCC objectives, the estates were yet to have written explicit JCC objectives in a constitution form as recommended by Marchington JCC Model despite that there was knowledge sharing with JCC members/ workers on some elements of JCC objectives. Lack of written explicit JCC objectives in a form of constitution could have given management chance to graft in elements of JCC objectives that would favour the interests of employer more than the interests of workers. Somehow in tandem with this line of thinking, eleven (11) out of fifteen (15) JCC members perceived those JCC objectives as biased towards fulfilling the interests of the employers or companies, for instance, putting much emphasis on productivity and job attendance issues and talking less on meeting employees' welfare issues.

4.2.2 JCC Elections, Numerical Membership Composition and Management Support

The JCC guidelines by Ministry of Labour (1998) stipulate that the JCC membership should consist of elected representatives of the employees with a fair and balanced representation of the activities of the organisation and nominated members of management. It further emphasises that the nominated members of the management should not exceed the representation of employees' members. Markey (2001) as quoted in Parasuraman et al (2012) calls it as a 50:50 mix of management and employees representatives. This is purposefully done to restrict management dominance over JCC members as some matters might be subjected to voting and the side with numerical advantage would dominate decision making. Membership composition is said to be very important as it fosters commitment among members to the principle of consultation (Parasuraman et al, 2012).

A cross section of responses from both HRM Officers and JCC members indicated that in all estates, JCC membership outnumbered management membership. Here are some the comments made by research subjects:

“...the management in most cases has less representation, sometimes it is only the estate manager and the human resources manager who attend the meetings. It is us JCC with the highest number of representatives during the meeting...”

(JCC member-JADA, on 11th January, 2019)

“...the recommendation from JCC guidelines is fifty to fifty (50:50) but due to operational hiccups you find that in most cases you have more membership on JCC side than management. A good example would be on our last meeting, we had only four from management and thirty three from employees (4:33). We have more JCC members in our meeting because they are the voice of people and management role is to listen...”

(HRM Officer-1, on 25th January, 2019)

From the responses, all the three (3) HRM Officers and all the fifteen (15) JCC members affirmed to the fact that JCC members had numerical advantage over management members.

However, whether JCC numerical advantage over management had any significance in influencing decision making is a subject of many factors including how meetings are chaired and the actual power of JCC as it will be seen later in this write up.

In terms of JCC elections process, a cross section of comments from HRM Officers, JCC members and workers not in JCC membership, suggest that, to a large extent, JCC members are democratically elected by their fellow workers and the District Labour Office is involved to preside over the JCC elections. This is opposed to the scenario where management only is involved to hand pick workers who are perceived loyal to the organisation to be members of JCC for purposes of easily manipulating them. Here are some of the comments from subjects:

“... I was elected by my fellow workers long time ago when the first owner of the estate, Mr Barrow was still here. We were blindfolded with a piece of cloth and those electing us were asked to stand behind us each one according to his/her choice, so I was elected with reasonable good votes....”

(JCC member-MATA, on 11th January, 2019)

“...the starting point will be communication that goes out to the divisions to inform members that their term of Office has expired. Then they will be asked to make nomination of those that will be standing as members during elections. Then we communicate to Labour Office, inviting the Officers to come and conduct elections. A representation is based on number of workers per division. During election process, members are democratically elected using the method that will be determined by the presiding Officer from the Labour Office and those with the most votes in a management unit or section carry the day....”

(HRM Officer-2, on 25th January, 2019)

“... JCC members are elected by people through vote...”

(Worker-Hh, on 15th January, 2019)

The comments by participants highlighted above show that employees are accorded with opportunity to elect their JCC representatives which is a democratically positive development. However, Pyman et al (2009) observe that involvement of employees in selecting their JCC representatives does not guarantee that JCC members would be accorded with power or authority to challenge management decision making. Thus what is important is that the JCC should be able to influence decision making process for the benefit of workers.

As regards management providing necessary support to JCC practices, that translates into promoting employee welfare, responses from JCC members and HRM Officers showed that, while HRM Officers felt the management was rendering necessary support to JCC practices, majority of JCC members felt necessary support from management to JCC practices was significantly lacking. Below are some of the comments from participants on management support to JCC practices:

“... the main support that management gives is that of recognition. Management recognises workers representatives or JCC that they have a role to play... The other support that management gives to JCC is allowing them to conduct meetings with workers or conduct awareness /sensitisation or problem appraisals during working hours and get paid regardless of them doing company work or not..., they are also provided with transport to wherever they are conducting their meetings from different sections...”

(HRM Officer -1, on 25th January, 2019)

“... on day to day management gives support to JCC membership, once in a while management provides refreshments once they are holding meetings, they cannot be in meetings the whole day without biting anything or taking a cup of tea...”

(HRM Officer -3, on 15th January, 2019)

The comments above show that from management perspective, JCC practices were provided with necessary support that included; transport, refreshments and pay on non-worked days of JCC meetings. However, it appears from JCC perspective that what management felt was support

to JCC practices was not recognised as support they expected. This is illustrated in some of the comments as below:

“...we believe when relevant stakeholders begin to come frequently and monitor the affairs of workers, management will begin to fear and do the right things...we have always wished to be supported but no real support is coming forth...”

(JCC member-MATA, on 11th January, 2019)

“.... Frankly speaking, there is no support...”

(JCC member-CHITHO, on 11th January, 2019)

“...Support! as I have already said, initially management used to support us have our own meetings before we could meet the management, Our chair could circulate letters for a meeting but nowadays, we are pressurised with work and such things do not happen...”

(JCC member-JADA, on 11th January, 2019)

Based on the above comments, it can be said that most of the JCC members were not in a position to appreciate what management felt was support rendered to JCC practices. In fact, many of the JCC members, that is, eleven (11) out of fifteen (15) felt real support was not given to JCC practices. Perhaps to them support meant something beyond what management thought was support. Majority of JCC members’ feeling of not being supported by management in their endeavour suggest that most of them might not be committed to the cause of doing what could uplift employee’s welfare because management does not appear to show interest in supporting the JCC practices. It can be further speculated that perhaps the support to JCC implied management ability to address issues that workers demanded from them, according to JCC perspective.

In summary, the findings indicate that election of JCC members is democratically done by workers and in terms of numerical composition; JCC has numerical advantage over management.

However, to suggest that this setup is working to the advantage of JCC members and workers is subject to other factors some of which will be looked at later in this write up. In terms of management support to JCC practices, most of the JCC members feel due support is not provided as opposed to HRM officers who perceived provision of transport, refreshments and pay on meeting days as due support.

4.2.3 Chair- ship of JCC Consultative Meetings and Handling of Varying Decisions

The manner in which JCC consultative meetings are managed is very critical in determining the outcome that would either benefit the workers or not. In terms of who chairs the JCC consultative meeting, the Ministry of Labour (1998) JCC guidelines provide that the chair of each side shall alternate as presiding chairperson for the meetings held. This is meant to level a playing field so that no one side dominates the proceedings of all the meetings. Opinions solicited from research participants indicate that almost all the meetings were chaired by someone from management side. Some participants' comments are highlighted below:

“ ...the overall chair of a particular meeting, in most cases comes from the management side, .., sometimes the general manager himself chairs the meeting...”

(HRM Officer-3, on 11th January, 2019)

“ ...the meeting is chaired by the management, we are like visitors in the meeting...”

(JCC member-JADA, on 11th January, 2019)

“ ...all our consultative meetings are chaired by management side, it has never happened that a JCC member is chairing the consultative meeting...”

(JCC member-MATA, on 11th January, 2019)

The comments highlighted above by most of the JCC members, fourteen (14) affirm to the fact that management dominated in chairing the JCC consultative meetings. This was contrary to the

spirit of JCC guidelines which emphasised on having the play field leveled between JCC side and management side. By dominating the consultative meetings, it was more likely that management had upper hand to control the proceedings of the meetings than JCC side. As such, it was possible for management to divert issues to suit their interests.

Regarding handling of issues especially where management and JCC had different line of thought, the findings revealed that management attempted to push its stand in most cases than to take the stand of JCC. Some of the comments by HRM Officers that affirm to this fact are highlighted below:

“... if there are any differences on issues that might affect , may be workers, what happens is that these issues are communicated back to JCC giving reasons for the differences that management have...”

(HRM Officer -2, on 25th January, 2019)

“... but I remember that sometimes management has put on hold certain issues for the next meeting...”

(HRM Officer-1, on 11th January, 2019)

The JCC guidelines by Ministry of Labour (1998) provide that when management side and JCC side are failing to reach general consensus on certain issues, such issues can be subjected to voting and the line of thinking that carries most votes should be considered as the most plausible idea that represents the majority, hence fit to be implemented. Contrary to this, it appears management made effort to justify their line of thinking at the expense of JCC line of thought. It thus meant that only decisions that management supported were able to be carried out.

In summary, the management of JCC, according to research participants’ perceptions, had areas which worked well. For instance, elections of JCC members in estates were democratically done by workers themselves as opposed to management imposing names of those to be elected. In addition to this, the District Labour Office was involved to preside over JCC elections meaning

that way, management could not interfere with the election process. Another thing which worked well was the numerical composition of JCC membership whereby JCC members outnumbered management members. On the other hand, things that did not work well, according to research participants perceptions included lack of tangible management support to JCC practices in terms of meeting workers welfare demands; management dominating chair -ship of JCC consultative meetings and having JCC objectives that were biased towards promoting the interests of the companies like emphasis on productivity and strict Job attendance and less emphasis on workers welfare. Conclusively, it meant that JCC practices were not managed in a manner that could have adequately assisted the welfare of workers promoted.

4.3 Consultation Process

The consultation process is said to be very important because it provides avenues for engagement between management and JCC members on issues of common interests for mutual benefits of both workers and the companies (Parasuraman et al, 2012). The research sought opinions, attitudes and comments of the participants on different aspects of consultation process between management and JCC members on one side, JCC members and workers on another side, in relation to employee welfare promotion.

4.3.1 Frequency of JCC Consultation Meetings, Agenda Initiation and Subjects Discussed

In respect of frequency of JCC consultation meetings, majority of research participants confirmed that at least in a year, there were some consultations that were done between the JCC and management. Here are some of the comments from the research participants.

“...in terms of the frequency of meetings, meetings are done quarterly...”

(HRM Officer-3, on 15/01/19)

“...JCC meetings are held at least once per month...”

(HRM Officer-2, on 25/01/19)

“...sometimes JCC consultative meetings are done but not regularly, sometimes three meetings a year...”

(JCC member-CHITHO, on 11/01/19)

“...we meet four times a year...”

(JCC member-JADA, on 11/01/19)

The above comments confirm to the fact that, to a large extent, JCC consultation meetings took place in tea estates between management and JCC members. Thus at least in a year, management and JCC members had opportunity to interact and assumingly deliberate on some related issues. However, it is still imperative to ascertain which issues were discussed in these consultative meetings and whether or not, they added any value to promote employee wellbeing.

As regards setting of the agenda for the JCC consultative meetings, the JCC guidelines document indicate that agenda would come from either management or JCC members depending on the issues at hand. However, comments from research participants show that most of the agenda items for JCC consultative meetings were initiated by the management. By this arrangement therefore, it was more likely that management had upper hand to bring in agenda items in a meeting, which were inclined to benefit the Company more than benefit the workers. Below are some of the comments from research participants.

“...the agenda comes from the management, JCC is just called to hear what management says so that we relay the same to people...”

(JCC member-BEBI, on 15/01/19)

“...the chair of management brings issues, some issues arise as we discuss; from discussions we select agenda for the day from issues raised...”

(JCC member-RAMU, on 15/01/19)

“...the agenda is initiated by the management. But once the agenda has been introduced, JCC members are given chance to comment on the agenda item. The management begins to interpret things that are feasible and things that are not feasible. Management finally concludes the meeting...”

(JCC member-JADA, on 11/01/19)

“...we have issues from management, ...we just summon JCC members and say we have a meeting , take issues from divisions and discuss...”

(HRM Officer-3, on 15/01/19)

From the comments highlighted above, it shows that management took lead to determine what was to be discussed at JCC consultative meeting. It also suggests that JCC remained with narrow space to push in desirable agenda that would positively impact on employee welfare.

In respect of subject matter discussed at JCC consultative meetings, Parasuraman et al (2012) assert that subject matter is the focus of JCC meetings and the subjects that might be discussed would range from minor matters to matters of strategic importance.

The comments from research participants, that is, JCC members and management, suggest that only minor welfare issues were discussed at JCC consultative meetings and not issues of strategic importance. Below are some of the comments from participants:

“....As management, we normally avoid to mention to JCC representatives about the profit we have made during financial year because anytime we mention our profit, they will demand huge salary or wages,... and we don't discuss strategic issues at these forums with JCC because JCC representatives as stated earlier on are concerned with welfare issues and issues of budget and investment plan are not part of this....”

(HRM Officer-1, on 11/01/19)

“... the issues that come out are employee welfare issues like food, housing, transport, toilets, conditions of service whereby you find employees complaining that they are not comfortable

with weighing scales or saying weighing clerks are tampering with weighing scales, Capitaos are not treating them fairly...’’

(HRM Officer-3, on 15/01/19)

‘... issues of strategic importance never come to JCC for discussion...’’

(JCC member-ELIGO, on 15/01/19)

‘...rarely are we involved in issues that are of strategic importance, for instance, when the Company was being sold from Mr Barrow to Mr Lutepo, then to the bank and finally to Indians, we did not hear anything from management about selling until there was a mess in relation to a strike in which workers were demanding for payment of terminal dues....’’

(JCC member-JADA, on 11/01/19)

The comments highlighted by research participants above affirm to the fact that JCC members are only given room to discuss with management on subjects that are of less importance and decisions on strategic matters are only made by management. This seems to agree with what is asserted by Beardwell and Holden (2001) that JCCs are just rubber stamps of management and their main focus is on trivial matters such as food and toilet. On another note, this is contrary to what is observed by Ab Rahman et al (2015) that JCC needs to be consulted by management when making critical strategic decisions because the direction of any organisation is determined by what employees believe and their day to day actions.

4.3.2 Effectiveness of Consultation Process in Terms of Taking on Board JCC Views; Consulting JCC in all Employee Welfare Matters and Consultation Aiding to Improve Employees’ Welfare

With regard to management consulting JCC before making decisions on welfare issues, the majority of the JCC research participants indicated that most of the decisions were made by management without consulting the JCC first. This is irrespective of the fact that at least some consultative meetings do happen in a year. Some comments of participants are captured as below:

“... we are rarely consulted, we just see things being done, but when visitors come like international auditors or regulators, we usually receive invitation letter to meet them. Apart from that, we are idle most of the time...”

(JCC member-JADA, on 11/01/19)

“...sometimes we are consulted for information sake, but we are not involved in most of the issues only when they want us to communicate to people...”

(JCC member-CHITO, on 11/01/19)

“...on certain issues JCC is not consulted, on other issues JCC is consulted, for instance, on wage increment we are only given information to communicate to employees...”

(JCC member-RAMU, on 15/01/19)

From the above comments, it is clear that management does not consult JCC members on all employee welfare matters before making decisions. Most of the consultations that management do with JCC members are for communicating decisions that management has already made so that JCC members relay the same to fellow workers they represent. Thus they are not party to the decision making process but mere channel for communication to fellow workers. If management makes most of the decisions without consulting JCC, it entails that JCC did not contribute much to decision making on welfare matters, as such; the outcome of most of the decisions might not have been up to the expectations of workers.

Views on whether JCC members felt they made meaningful contributions towards decision making were sought. Here below are some of the comments that emanated from JCC members:

“...JCC contributions towards decision making are limited, management use their own set procedures to do things...”

(JCC member-SMAGHA, on 25/01/19)

“...to a large extent, contributions from JCC are not taken on board...”

(JCC member-BEBI, on 15/01/19)

“...I should not lie here, we make limited contributions to decision making, may be the management tend to overlook us and selectively determine which issues to involve us and which ones are reserved solely for management. I for one, I am not involved in most of the things...”

(JCC member-MATA, on 11/01/19)

The highlighted comments above point to the fact that, in the opinion of most of JCC members, that is, twelve (12) out of fifteen (15), not much was contributed from JCC side to decisions that were made by management regarding employee welfare issues. Thus it was more likely that the outcome of decisions was more inclined to take management perspective than workers perspective. This wanted to seek JCC opinions as to whether the consultation process proved effective to improve employees’ welfare. Most of the comments from JCC members showed that consultation process was not appreciated as an effective tool that aided the improvement of employees’ welfare. Here below are some of the comments from JCC members;

“...the consultations don’t help much to change things, when we discuss things, that is the end; we don’t know what the problem is. Most of the things are trumped on by management....”

(JCC member-AFRA, on 11/01/19)

“ ...you have asked me a good question, only that these people don’t listen; for something to be effected, it will have started from far. You might meet with management quite well but the problem is with effecting change...”

(JCC member-JADA, on 11/01/19)

“...as JCC a member, our aim is always to assist improve things for betterment of workers that we represent, but the company wants things to go its side; that is the problem....”

(JCC member-MATA, on 11/01/19)

The comments of JCC members highlighted above reveal that, despite management consulting the JCC on some of welfare issues, there was no real change that was realised from the consultations as management could not usually respond positively to the demands of JCC.

However, there were other JCC members who felt that consultations partly aided to improve employees' welfare although not all issues were responded to positively by management.

“...somehow the consultations bring about change as some of the issues discussed are considered....”

(JCC member-BEBI, on 15/01/19)

“ ...some things are done, other things are not done...”

(JCC member-RAMU, on 15/01/19)

The above comments regard consultation process as partially useful because some of the JCC demands were met by management through consultations while other JCC demands remained unmet.

Few other JCC members viewed consultation process as instrumental in bringing complete change in the employees' welfare.

“... to a certain extent, yes consultative meetings aid to improve employee welfare because JCC is able to follow up on the concerns taken up before management until something positive has been done...”

(JCC member-SMARGA, on 25/01/19)

From the comments by JCC research participants, it is clear that there were some mixed views as regards consultative meetings aiding to improve employees' welfare. While eight (8) out of fifteen (15) JCC members felt consultative meetings did not meaningfully aid to improve employees' welfare, three (3) out of fifteen (15) JCC members felt consultative communication gap between JCC members and workers was not good enough to facilitate efforts toward improving general employee wellbeing.

In terms of JCC giving feed –back from management to employees, workers had the following to comment:

“...some feed-back contains good responses while others not; anyone who questions is earmarked as troublesome and is immediately sucked off...”

(Worker-Cc, on 15/01/19)

“... JCC is sent by workers to management but it yields no results, as such, feed –back given does not please people; The JCC is, therefore , not valued much by people as something that assists...”

(Worker-Dd, on 15/01/19)

“... feed-back is there but promises are not fulfilled...”

(Worker-F, on 16/01/19)

“...our concerns are not considered, they mind what the company is directing them to do and not our concerns; we are just told lies...”

(Worker-E, on 16/01/19)

The comments from workers above suggest that JCC at least was able to give feed-back to workers regarding consultative meetings it held with management. However, the feed- back did

not positively address the concerns of workers to a large extent as most of it was mere rhetoric that things would change as commented by one worker:

‘...there is no real feed -back given to people by JCC, they just say things will change...’

(Worker-M, on 16/01/19)

In summary, the consultation process could be said to have had some best practices on one hand as there were at least some consultation meetings taking place between management and JCC in a year and also JCC was able to provide feed-back from the consultations it had with management to employees. However, it appears feed- back was provided only when management sent JCC to relay some information to workers regarding new developments. The negative side of the consultation process was that the agenda for the consultative meetings were always initiated by management and rarely by JCC. Moreover, management made unilateral decisions on most of employees’ welfare matters with little or no contributions from JCC to the decision making process. In addition to this, JCC did not consult employees before meeting management for consultative meetings but simply came to relay information from management on decisions that were made. This was so because often times, management initiated the meetings and the agenda of the meetings and moreover, most of the meetings were there to communicate already made decisions and not to discuss issues. Owing to all this short comings, that is why it was generally perceived by JCC members and employees that consultative meetings were not effective enough to aid the improvement of employee welfare.

4.4 Power of JCC

The power of JCC is one of the most important elements that would impact on the welfare of workers meaningfully depending on the degree of power JCC has to influence change. Parasuraman et al (2012) observe that where the power of JCC is well defined and stated explicitly in the constitution, it acts as a reference point for drawing resolutions during consultative meetings. Opinions were sought from research participants regarding various aspects of JCC power and their comments are articulated below.

4.4.1 JCC Power to Influence Management Decision Making Process.

Where JCC has ability to influence management decisions, the decisions made are able to take care the interest of workers at large, where JCC is failing to influence management decisions, most of the decisions made are biased towards the interest of the Company. JCC and HRM officers were asked to comment on whether JCC was perceived to have had meaningful influence on management decision making process and here below are some of the comments they had to say:

“...they have ability to influence but on a small scale; they are mindful of their continuity in the employment; they know that they have a letter of appointment on contract basis from the employer, so loyalty is paramount...”

(HRM Officer-1, on 11/01/19)

“...yes, our influence is very limited. This is because we don't have external support like from Labour Office that should give us vigour...”

(JCC member-JADA, on 11/01/19)

“... JCC has no influence on management decision making; we are like toothless lion...”

(JCC member-MATA, 11/01/19)

“...the influence of JCC on management is somehow limited, management threatens people with ideas and they fear that they would be sucked off...”

(JCC member-EVAKA, on 15/01/19)

“... to a certain extent, when you take frontline role, you are sucked off from work; for fear of this, you do not take active role....”

(JCC member-WIJU, on 15/01/19)

The comments above point to the fact that JCC had very limited influence on management decision making. The management created an intimidating atmosphere which discouraged JCC members to take active role in their work as they were afraid of being sucked off from employment. Thus management made unilateral decisions as so commented by a JCC member here below:

“...management makes its own decisions....”.

(JCC –GICHA member, on 25/01/19)

The majority of JCC members who asserted that management decisions were by less measure being influenced by JCC input seem to corroborate with most of the comments that came from workers when asked of their opinions on how they assessed JCC ability to influence management decision making. Some of their comments are quoted below:

“...JCC has very little ability, top management does not give positive regard to issues taken by JCC before management...”

(Worker-Hh, on 15/01/19)

“...JCC has no influence, when it goes before management, it sides with management and ignores workers...”

(Worker-Oo, on 15/01/19)

“....JCC can't influence management decisions because JCC does things in favour of the Company...”

(Worker-C, on 16/01/19)

“... JCC has ability but as you know, decisions from management are irreversible...”

(Worker-sS, on 25/10/19)

The comments from workers as captured above present an impression from workers perspective that JCC's influence in management decision making was significantly limited. This, therefore, entails that most of the welfare decisions made were nothing but what was being approved in the eyes of management. The limitation of JCC to influence management is in line with what is being advanced by Parasuraman et al (2012) that to a certain extent, JCC relies on management discretion and has no capacity to put pressure to management in terms of issues relating to terms and conditions of service, due to lack of legal mandates.

Limited influence of JCC over management decision making puts to question its power to really represent workers and promote their wellbeing. Views were sought from JCC members on their perceptions as regards its power to represent workers interests before management and these were some of the comments they had to say:

“...I feel JCC is powerless...”

(JCC member-EVAKA, on 15/01/19)

“...Power of JCC is suffocated by management, if you take active role you are targeted for redundancy...”

(JCC member-ELIGO, on 15/01/19)

“...Power is limited to say the truth because when we take issues before management, they do not respond positively...”

(JCC member-SIJO, on 11/01/19)

“...we have no power, we are not consulted or valued, when things have gone sour, for instance, when demonstrations arise, that is when management will need us; we don’t even have an office...”

(JCC member-AFRA, on 11/01/19)

The majority of JCC members, that is, eleven (11) out of fifteen (15), felt JCC did not possess the power to stand for workers’ interests before management. One of the reasons frequently cited for the JCC to be powerless was fear for management threats to suck off JCC members who were seemingly active in claiming for the rights of workers. It thus meant management failed to create an enabling environment for JCC members to play their role as voice for workers because of intimidations to every dissenting view. The majority of JCC confirming its powerlessness is in line with what is being advanced by Parasuraman et al (2012) that, due to lack of legal backing and therefore, collective bargaining rights, JCC has limited capacity to put pressure to management on issues relating to terms and conditions of service.

Closely related to power, workers were asked to rate JCC’s effectiveness to promote employees welfare. Majority of workers who commented indicate that the JCC was less effective to be able to uplift workers wellbeing. Below are some of the highlights of their comments:

“....JCC is completely ineffective, it is reaping over our head....”

(Worker-Ss, on 15/01/19)

“....JCC is not effective, it used to be effective but not now....”

(Worker-M, on 16/01/19)

“....JCC is helpful because it takes issues to management but it is management that trump upon issues.JCC is only quick to report to workers about the directives of the company....”

(Worker-J, on 16/01/19)

“.....JCC does not work effectively because our needs are not answered, it simply pleases the aspirations of the management....”.

(Worker-mM, 25/01/19)

The above highlighted comments from workers clearly show that the JCC practices were rated to be ineffective in promoting employees' wellbeing. The main reason for being ineffective was largely due to management dominating control over JCC and failing to positively respond to issues that JCC presented to management. This agrees with what is being asserted by Parasuraman et al (2012) that JCC has narrow jurisdiction and its main role to management is purely advisory to the extent that it is in most cases less effective due to high magnitude of management prerogatives. Pyman (2009) adds that when there is perception of monopoly control of JCC by management, employees and / or JCC members feel denied of an opportunity to participate in or influence decision making in matters thought important to them, as such, the effectiveness of JCC declines over time.

Further to rating the effectiveness of JCC, the extent of workers satisfaction towards JCC practices in representing workers welfare matters before management was also assessed and the following are some of the comments coming from the majority of workers in a focused group discussion:

“.....we are not satisfied with JCC, of course our problems are taken before management by JCC but they are not responded to positively by management.....”

(Worker-Gg, on 15/01/19)

“.....we are not satisfied with JCC, we have concerns such as inadequate uniforms, food related problems, when we complain, our concerns are not addressed....”

(Worker-R, on 16/01/19)

“....we are not satisfied with JCC, JCC is afraid of management, yes it is powerful but afraid

of losing their jobs....”

(Worker –I, on 16/01/19)

“....as workers, we are facing a lot of challenges which JCC is failing to convince management to address, for instance, food given to workers is inadequate, porridge provided is watery and without sugar, contracts of employment have been reduced from five years to six months, no trainings are done regarding our work, protective wears provided are inadequate and some of those given are worn out, it is rainy season but most of us workers have no rain coats, tax deductions on our pay are heavy, the pay we are getting is little, because you have come, perhaps you will help us improve things....”(Worker-B, on 16/01/19)

“.....JCC as mediators, whenever our concerns are taken to management, no response is coming forth. In short people are not satisfied.....”

(Worker-kK, on 25/01/19)

From the comments highlighted above, it can be revealed that workers were not satisfied with JCC practices because the voice of workers was not heard before management through JCC. In other words, JCC failed to move management to act on workers’ demands or expectations. This situation seems to agree with what Beardwell et al (2001) assert that JCCs are merely rubber stamping bodies for management initiatives and if anything, they only deal with trivial matters like tea and toilets.

From what had been discussed so far regarding JCC, it remained an elusive question as to whether JCC as an indirect employee voice mechanism was still perceived to have had any strength. The research participants were asked to comment on the perceived strength of JCC and different categories of the participants gave their comments as captured below:

4.4.2 JCC Strength According to Human Resources Officer/Management Perception

An interview with Human Resources Officers shows that management was able to recognise at least some strength in JCC as a workers voice mechanism. Below are some of their comments demonstrating the same.

“.....the main one is the numbers, they are many as alluded to earlier on, because they are many, they are able to speak with one voice; the second strength that I see is that they get trained by Labour Officers on what their rights are, so they have justification on what is for them and what is not, they know what their rights are....”

(HRM Officer-2, on 25/01/19)

“....because of having JCC in place, we have no labour strikes which is a sign that people are living in harmony; people are sure that when they have an issue, they are going to present it to JCC which in turn is going to present to management....”

(HRM Officer-3, on 15/01/19)

“.... I have noted that JCC use their numerical numbers to achieve what they are fighting for, they use some sort of threatening statements using their numerical numbers that if you cannot approve the request we have presented, employees will be demotivated, management has sometimes listened, sometimes it has not listened, so their strength is the number of employees we have in the organisation...”

(HRM Officer-1, on 11/01/19)

From the comments highlighted above, it shows that somehow, the concerns of workers are communicated to management through JCC although management does not listen to each and every concern. However, the interaction between JCC and management assists to promote industrial peace as workers have at least a channel of communicating their concerns to management. This agrees with what is being asserted by Okpu et al (2014) that JCC helps to provide avenue for employees to express their views and hence reduce industrial actions at workplaces.

4.4.3 Strength of JCC According to Workers' Perception.

Soliciting views from workers on the perceived strength of JCC, their comments can reveal mixed feelings on how they looked at JCC. Below are some of the comments that came from workers:

“...JCC is given our concerns which they take to management, I should say JCC tries to take our views to management but management fails JCC, should we blame them...”

(Worker-Ff, on 15/01/19)

“...JCC attempts to take some issues before management, though not all taken before management succeeds...”

(Worker-Kk, on 15/01/19)

“...JCC is completely weak in all issues...”

(Worker-M, on 16/01/19)

“...JCC does not act, it fears to take central part in issues for fear of being sucked off...”

(Worker-O, on 16/01/19)

“... at least JCC is able to take issues to management, but it is frustrated as management doesn't take and discuss issues...”

(Worker –B, on 16/01/19)

From the workers' comments as captured above, it can be noted that the only strength of JCC that is being acknowledged is that it is used as a channel of communication of issues taken from workers to management and from management to workers despite that most of such issues do not get due attention before management. Ab Rahman (2015) describes JCC as a form of indirect participation structure in industrial relations cycle, which provides a platform for information and communication at the enterprise level. However, in relation to influencing decision on issues

being communicated from workers to management, Parasuraman et al (2012) observe that, to a certain extent, JCC relies on management discretion in terms of which direction to take. In this regard, it is not surprising that most of the issues taken to management by JCC are not responded to as workers expect.

4.4.4 JCC Strength According to JCC Members' Perception

Soliciting views from JCC members on their perception of their strength, there were mixed reactions ranging from others thinking they had no strength, through others thinking they had partial strength to others thinking they had some strength. Some comments from JCC members were captured as below:

“...at first, there was strength but it dwindled with time, in the tea industry, there is a lot of intimidation that create fear to people...”

(JCC member-CAKA, on 25/01/19)

“...whatever happens, we are not involved as JCC, when management is in dire need of something that is when we are consulted; where there is tension between management and people we are asked to protect; when things have gone sour we are asked to take part in solving matter, when an issue has arisen in the field we are asked to take part in solving it...”

(JCC member-AFRA, on 11/01/19)

“...some things are honoured when JCC take requests to management. For instance, we requested a borehole, we were given, we requested for houses, they promised to construct next year...”

(JCC member-MATA, 11/01/19)

“...the strength of JCC is in its ability to reconcile people who disagree...”

(JCC member-ELIGO, 15/01/19)

“...management is induced to act, management is reminded to act on their promises...”

(JCC member-BEBI, 15/01/19)

“...complaints are taken before management...”

(JCC member-WIJU, on 15/01/19)

“... there is no strength...”

(JCC member-GICHA, on 25/01/19)

The comments by JCC members above suggest that JCC recognised its role of taking workers' issues to management and inducing positive responses on some issues as its strength. However, the fact that JCC had limited influence on all management decisions and their involvement in issues was not pre-programmed but rather at the discretion of management, most of JCC members still felt were not strong enough as an employee voice mechanism. Pyman et al (2009) discovered in their research that lack of constitutional basis or legislation regulating JCC made employers feel reluctant to relinquish managerial prerogative. Similarly in a Malawi set-up, JCCs operate without constitutional basis that give them legitimacy and authority to function. As such, it is not easy for a JCC to have a say on all managerial decisions that were made.

From what has been commented by the three categories of the research participants, an overall picture that is emerging is that the Human Resources Management Officers seem to over exaggerate that JCC was strong enough to influence management decisions because of JCC and workers numerical advantage as compared with management side. Perhaps the Human Resources Management Officers, as part of management, did not want to give an impression that they were in control of all decisions and JCC were merely rubber stamps. On the other hand, JCC members and workers recognised the JCC strength of providing at least a platform for communicating their concerns but were quick to observe that most of their concerns communicated did not see the green light at the end of the day, a development that appears to reflect real life situation on the ground.

On the other side, what was very prominent in the discourse of the thesis write up was an impression that JCC had weaknesses. Views were sought from participants to comment on the

perceived weaknesses of JCC and different categories of research participants gave their perceived opinions as articulated below:

4.4.5 The Weaknesses of JCC According to Human Resource Officers' Perception.

In order to determine what would be weak areas of JCC as an employee voice mechanism, views were solicited from Human Resources Officers and some of their comments recorded below show their perception in this regard:

“... their main weakness is constitutional, that is , there is no JCC constitution that empowers them to negotiate for monetary benefits, but also another weakness could be their knowledge base....”

(HRM Officers-2, on 25/01/19)

“...the weaknesses are not many; it is lack of understanding in most cases of their responsibility that is the main challenge of JCC leadership...they will only complain when the food is undercooked, ...or they will say they need extra food, in most cases , they lack capacity, they will not raise issues relevant to their working environment, sometimes they have brought petty issues like the relish was not enough so people wanted to leave for their homes,... we say work first , complain later....”

(HRM Officers-3, on 15/01/19)

“...lack of knowledge on the part of JCC regarding the Employment Act,...they don't know much about the Company operations,...they have sometimes asked a very big percentage of wages to be awarded to employees without knowing how much the Company is fairing in terms of profit margin....”

(HRM Officers-1, on 11/01/19)

From the comments put forward by Human Resources Officers above, a number of JCC weaknesses are revealed. In the first place, it is highlighted that the JCC does not have constitutional backing that empowers it to negotiate for better terms and conditions of work.

Furthermore, the JCC lacks capacity and/ or knowledge regarding their work to the extent that they sometimes made unrealistic demands and at times raised petty issues before management. Thus the leadership of JCC was said to be clueless in many things. The Human Resources Officers sentiments confirm what was noted by Parasuraman et al (2012) that, in most cases, JCC lacks legal mandate to function and is thus short of collective bargaining rights. Furthermore, as observed by Parasuraman et al (2012), the capacity of JCC is so limited that it can rarely put pressure on management for better terms and conditions of service. Otherwise JCCs were seen as rubber stamping bodies for management initiatives and their focus was on trivial issues like tea and toilet (Beardwell et al, 2001).

4.4.6 The Weaknesses of JCC According to Workers Perception

Views were solicited from workers on their perception regarding the weaknesses of JCC and below are some of the comments of the workers who spoke:

“... JCC is completely toothless, company underrates them because they are workers, the issue of PAYE tax deductions is too much but it remains unresolved...”

(Worker-L, on 16/01/19)

“...the main weakness of JCC is fear, we complain but issues don’t succeed...”

(Worker-Q, on 16/01/19)

“...JCC members are intimidated and don’t take up issues head on, for instance, newly recruited workers are yet to receive raincoat yet it is rainy season...”

(Worker –E, on 16/01/19)

“...JCC is pro-company, it does not bring results to people it represents, it only brings communication from management to people...”

(Worker-tT, on 25/01/19)

“...We are shouted at the office by management and JCC just watch without siding with us, JCC is just as good as not being there...”

(Worker-qQ, on 25/01/19)

“...management has powers more than JCC, there is need to do something with management so that our requests are given due attention...”

(Worker-Ii, on 15/01/19)

The comments by workers as highlighted above disclose the underlying weaknesses of JCC that it is full of fear as it is overpowered by management through perpetual intimidations. Therefore, instead of bringing desired change to workers, JCC is simply used as communication tool conveying messages from management to workers. Parasuraman et al (2012) describes two critical types of communication, that is, upward flow of communication which is aimed at getting employees' contributions or ideas for an improved quality of decision making and also downward flow of communication which is aimed at persuading employees to accept management proposals. From the comments of workers highlighted above, it appears downward flow of communication was more pronounced than upward flow of communication and instead of management coming with persuasion to JCC members, it came with directives, suggestive of management irresistible power to control JCC.

4.4.7 The Weaknesses of JCC According to JCC Members' Perception.

JCC members had to give views on what they perceived as JCC weaknesses as far as their experiences were concerned. Below are some the comments captured from JCC members who spoke during personal interviews:

“....JCC is usually threatened by management, we are fearful...”

(JCC member-JADA, on 11/01/19)

“...management does not take issues seriously, thus we do not prosper, and therefore we get discouraged with the treatment they give us...”

(JCC member-CHITHO, on 11/01/19)

“...we do not have an office, we do not get in touch to discuss matters, and we needed to be meeting regularly...”

(JCC member-AFRA, 11/01/19)

“...when we approach the management and do not respond to us as expected, we get discouraged”

(JCC member-ELIGO, 15/01/19)

“...management oppresses JCC members and the concerns of people are not taken on board, this discourages us....”

(JCC member-WIJU, on 15/01/19)

“...as JCC, we do not have the capacity, if you know what is happening you become encouraged, when you do not know what is happening , you are discouraged , we do not know what is happening , that is a problem....”

(JCC member-CAKA, on 25/01/19)

“....the weakness of JCC lies in the fact that the chair has been unable to bring members together to discuss issues pertaining to workers welfare...”

(JCC member-JACHA, on 25/01/19)

“....there is no formal collective bargaining agreement hence no chance to do collective bargaining to effectively influence change on some welfare issues....”

(JCC member-SMAGHA, on 25/01/19)

From the comments of JCC members highlighted above, JCC as an employee voice mechanism had several weaknesses of which, among others, was lack of capacity; inactive JCC leadership; failure to hold regular meetings to strategise on their actions and non existence of Collective Bargaining Agreement. JCC members acknowledged that issues that were taken by JCC before management bore no fruits as management paid little or no positive regard to concerns of workers. The management threats towards JCC members only created fear and discouragement among members to the extent that they could not effectively function to produce expected results to the pleasure of workers they represented.

Ab Rahman et al (2015) observe that for JCC to be effective and useful, it must be given chance to transform itself into a respectful body with legitimacy in the eyes of the work force and where management is able to regard it as important stakeholders and pave way for JCC to influence final decisions through two way communication, or discourse, consultation, co-determination to the extent of having joint control over all employees' welfare issues.

From what has been commented by the three categories of research participants on their perceived general weaknesses of JCC, the Human Resources Management Officers singled out lack of legal framework to support JCC practices and knowledge gap among JCC members as major weaknesses. The JCC members and workers on the other side, while recognising that JCC did not have collective bargaining rights, hinted that failure by management to create an enabling working environment for JCC to function due to persistent intimidations weakened JCC and also failure by management to respond positively to JCC welfare demands made JCC to appear non performing in the eyes of workers.

In summary, assessing the power of JCC as an employee voice mechanism would lead to a conclusive statement that JCC was limited in its power to influence management decision making process and, therefore, short of representing the interests of the work force in the best way workers would have loved to see. The powerlessness of JCC is largely due to lack of legal backing which management capitalised to create an intimidating atmosphere that left JCCs nothing but just mere management rubber-stamps, doing nothing more than only dancing to the tune of management. Since the final say rested in the hands of management, the aspirations of workers were always at the mercy of management discretion as to which one to consider or not to

consider. In the light of this predicament, promotion of employees' welfare to the optimum level remained a far- fetched dream.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has explained and interpreted research findings in the light of study objectives. The finding discussions and presentations have been derived from qualitative data generated from interviews and focused group discussions around study objective themes such as; Management of JCC; Consultation process of JCC and Power of JCC. These have been further related to JCC components by Marchington like; Objective, Subject matter, Membership, Power; Consultation process. The next and final chapter is on summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This is the last chapter of the study that summarises the main findings of the study, draws conclusions and makes some recommendations. The chapter further highlights the main contributions of the research and suggests possible areas for future research work.

5.2 Summary of Findings

This study was designed to qualitatively assess the role JCC, as an employee voice mechanism, plays in the promotion of workers' welfare in the tea industry in Malawi. It was to spotlight the strength and weaknesses of JCC as an employee voice mechanism with a view of coming up with recommendations that would improve JCC to become more effective as a means of employees-management engagement in the industrial relations circles. In order to attain the desired goal, the study was geared at addressing the following three specific objectives: The first specific objective "to establish how JCCs were managed for the benefit of employees in the tea industry in Thyolo district. The second specific objective "to examine the consultation process between management and JCC on matters that affect employees in the tea industry in Thyolo district". The third specific objective "to evaluate the ability of JCC to influence management decisions for the benefit of employees in the tea industry in Thyolo district".

5.2.1 JCC was not Managed Appropriately in a Manner to Benefit Employees in Terms of Promoting their Welfare

In connection with specific objective one that sought to establish how JCC practices were being managed to benefit the work force in terms of promoting their welfare, the study revealed that the manner in which JCC was being managed suffocated its potential to act as an effective and able employee voice mechanism. The study noted that the very objectives of JCC were biased towards satisfying the interests of the Company as opposed to balancing the interests of workers and of the organisation. The study further noted that although JCC members were democratically elected by workers, there was no guarantee that JCC was safe from the control of management. For instance, it was observed that management chaired all the JCC consultative meetings thereby having an upper hand in controlling the proceedings of the meeting and swaying everything towards fulfilling the interests of the organisation.

Moreover, the agenda items for each JCC consultative meeting were initiated by management instead of giving room for JCC to initiate some of the agenda for the meetings and the meetings were initiated by management instead of giving chance to JCC to propose for meetings. In addition to this, it was observed that the JCC contributed little or nothing to the management final decision making process implying that almost all decisions were solely made by management. The JCC as an employee voice mechanism did not get the much needed and meaningful support from management for it to be vibrant and perform outstandingly to the satisfaction of all workers.

5.2.2 The Consultation Process Between Management and JCC was not Effective Enough to Address Employees' Welfare Matters

In relation to specific objective two that sought to examine the effectiveness of the JCC consultation process to address employees' welfare matters, the study established that the consultation process was found wanting in various aspects, as such, welfare matters regarding workers were not effectively addressed as expected. The study noted that although some consultative meetings were confirmed done, most of the critical welfare decisions were made by management without consulting the JCC. Perhaps this is why it was observed that JCC brought only trivial issues on discussion table while decisions regarding all issues of strategic importance were solely made by management without consulting the JCC. The study further noted that during consultative meetings, JCC members outnumbered management members. Nevertheless, JCC did not benefit from their numerical advantage during consultative meetings because management controlled all the consultative meetings in terms of initiating the agenda and chairing all the consultative meetings. Moreover, the study noted that JCC could not usually consult employees before meeting the management and failed to give feed back to workers on whatever transpired during consultative discussions except when communicating directives from management. This was because management initiated meetings, initiated the agenda and at times called JCC on a short notice for a meeting, in most cases not to discuss issues but to communicate what was already decided so that JCC relayed the same to fellow workers. Out of the few occasions of feed- back which JCC gave to workers, most of it was negative feed- back. As observed by the study, views of JCC were hardly taken on board as top management determined all the decisions. As a consequence of the foregoing, it was conclusively observed that the consultation process did not really aid to improve employees' welfare.

5.2.3 JCC had Limited Power or Ability to Influence Management over Decision Making Process

Regarding the third specific objective which sought to assess the JCC powers or ability to influence management decision making process for the benefit of employees, the study established that the JCCs' ability or power was significantly limited to the extent that most of the decisions were solely made by management and JCC acted as a rubber-stamp of management wishes. The study found that, due to lack of legal mandate and collective bargaining rights for JCC, management took advantage to intimidate JCC members so much that every dissenting view was threatened with dismissal. Therefore, JCC lack of capacity and management intimidating atmosphere rendered JCC as powerless and ineffective employee voice mechanism that did not benefit the work force much as anticipated.

5.3 Study Conclusion

The study has assessed the role JCC plays in the promotion of employees' welfare in the tea industry in Malawi. The study has found that JCC, as an employee voice mechanism, despite acting as communication channel that provides means of interaction between management and workers thereby sustaining industrial peace, it does not adequately and effectively assist to promote employee wellbeing. In the first place, JCC has limited power to influence management decision making process due to absence of legal collective bargaining rights and management intimidations. Second, the JCC practices are not managed appropriately to pave way for JCC to flourish and perform its roles vibrantly to satisfy the interests of the work-force due to management monopoly of control over JCC and bias towards organisation interests at the expense of work force interests. Third, the consultation process between management and JCC does not effectively address the welfare plight of workers due to management failure to accommodate JCC views and JCC's lack of capacity to bring meaningful subjects on the table for discussions. In terms of JCC Marchington Model, it has been examined that the five components were characterised by deficits that suggest that JCC was ineffective. Ab Rahman (2015) observes that, for JCC to be effective, the five primary components must correspond and relate with one another. That is, the subject matter discussed during consultative meetings must not be limited to trivial issues only but should range from all welfare related issues to issues of strategic importance; the objective of the JCC ought to be clear and made public to be understood by JCC members and workers and should not be biased towards fulfilling the interests of the organisation at the expense of workers well-being; the JCC should have power to influence management

decision making in all matters that affect workers; the consultation process should be done in good faith and should provide for upward and downward flow of information, that is, from JCC members to management and from management to JCC members and from workers to JCC members and from JCC members to workers; the membership composition should be in such a way that management does not exceed the JCC members at any consultative meeting and members at both sides should be credible enough to handle welfare issues in the best interest of workers. Looking at JCC practices in tea estates, therefore, the five primary components failed to intertwine and speak to each other hence rendering the JCC ineffective. For instance, the JCC members were able to take to management trivial issues instead of tangible welfare issues that would improve the wellbeing of workers and were not involved in issues of strategic importance; the JCC did not have powers to influence management decision making process; the consultation process was in such a way that mostly information flowed from management to JCC in form of directives; the JCC objectives were not put in constitution and publicised although JCC members had partial knowledge of the same and the objectives appeared to be biased towards the organisation as opposed to wellbeing of workers, evidenced by emphasis on productivity and absenteeism issues and little say on welfare improvement issues; although JCC was numerically advantaged over management, this did not have any value as management controlled all the consultative meetings and initiated the agenda of the meetings. As regards the JCC consultation model, the JCC practices in the tea industry were characterised by elements of alternative model, marginal model and competing model hence was only used by management to undermine the power of union, thereby yielding minimal benefits for workers. The JCC practices should have adopted the adjunct model of consultation to impact positively on the improvement of employees' well-being. In a nutshell, JCC is an important indirect employee voice mechanism that only needs to be capacitated and given an enabling working environment for it to become a usefully effective employee voice mechanism that would benefit both the work-force and the organisation.

5.4 Recommendations

With regard to the research findings highlighted above and in line with the opinions of the research subjects, several recommendations are put forward which may help the JCC structure to improve and become an effective employee voice mechanism. These recommendations have also considered the already discussed strength and weaknesses of JCC as an employee engagement structure. The following are the suggested recommendations:

5.4.1 There Should be Provisions in the Legislation that Give JCC Legal Mandate to Function

The absence of legal mandate for JCC to operate is a recipe for manipulation by management as JCC structure is deemed to be management initiative designed to advance organisation interests. In the absence of legal backing, JCC as a structure cannot have collective bargaining rights as enjoyed by other structures like unions. Without collective bargaining rights, it is difficult for JCC to influence management decision making process hence difficult to serve the interests of workers as expected. Therefore, for organisation's management to respect JCC as an employee voice mechanism, it has to draw its legitimacy from the legal frame work of the land. The Labour Relations Act only recognises the establishment, existence and operations of trade unions as direct employee voice mechanism. The Act is silent on indirect employee voice mechanism that may equally play a vital role either to compliment union work or act as a substitute where union does not exist.

5.4.2 The JCC structure must be well capacitated and supported to carry out its functions effectively

The JCC capacity is by far from being at par with that of management. This mismatch in terms of capacity is only doing disservice to the workforce which JCC represents. Due to lack of capacity, JCC cannot be involved in discussing issues of strategic importance which have a bearing on workers welfare. Due to lack of capacity, JCC cannot articulate issues of substance before management other than petty or trivial issues. Due to lack of capacity, JCC cannot influence management decision making process other than rubber stamping the same. Therefore, there is need to adequately build the capacity of JCC through trainings, provision of office space for its operations and facilitating elections of suitable leadership of the structure.

5.4.3 The Management of Organisations Must Create an Enabling Working Environment for JCC Structure to Become Vibrant

The management of organisations needs to view JCC members as stakeholders and not competitors. Therefore, management must desist from intimidating tendencies and engage JCC members in good faith for the good of workers as well as the organisations. Management should guarantee job security for JCC members even in an event that they seem to advance dissenting views. JCC structures should operate as independent entities without much interference from management. JCC should not be used as mere rubber stamps for management decisions but rather their constructive views should

be taken on board for the good of workers and the organisation. Management should not monopolise control of JCC practices but rather be flexible in every aspect, for instance, rotating/alternating the chair-ship of JCC consultation meetings between JCC and management and also accommodating JCC to initiate agenda for the consultative meetings as well as proposing for a consultative meeting when need arises.

5.4.4 There is Need to Put in Place Proper Channels of Communications Between JCC and Management and Between JCC and Workers

The upward and downward flow of information at both levels is very important. Management should not only use JCC to pass directives down to workers but should also allow concerns of workers to flow through JCC to management. JCC must consult workers to hear their views and concerns before holding consultative meetings with management. Management should give feedback to JCC on all issues which should in turn trickle down to workers. Issues raised by workers through JCC must be given due attention and be addressed where possible. If there is a good reason for not addressing some of the concerns, a clear explanation ought to be communicated to the workers as part of feed- back on their concerns. Putting in place well managed suggestion boxes at division level of an estate would be helpful to widen the horizon of a podium where workers can express their sentiments.

5.4.5 There is Need to Enhance Regular Meetings and Frequent Monitoring by Other Stakeholders

Management and JCC ought to meet regularly to discuss all cropping up issues. Similarly, JCC members should have time to meet and strategise on their actions. Further to this, JCC members should have time to meet workers they represent just to be updated on what could be currently circulating in their minds. Beside regular meetings, other stakeholders with regulatory mandate such as Department of Labour Office should frequently monitor tea estates in order to assist sustaining fair labour practices and sound industrial relations.

5.5 Study Limitation

The study was confined to Thyolo district tea industry and to selected tea estates due to financial constraints and time factor. Resources permitting, the study would have been extended to all estates in Thyolo, Mulanje and Nkhata-Bay as tea growing districts so as to have a wider representation. However, the general practices in the tea industry were homogeneous and the findings of the selected tea estates in Thyolo district attempted to present a fair overview of the

tea industry though not an overall generalisation for the entire industry. Another challenge was the busy working environment in the tea estates which provided a limited time for some of the targeted research participants to avail themselves for data collection exercise. However, the data collection exercise used an opportune space of time within tea breaks, lunch breaks, immediate after knocking off hours and weekends and all the targeted research participants were able to find time to participate in the data collection exercise.

5.6 Future Research Work

Having examined the role of JCC in the promotion of employees' welfare in the tea industry, in this study, it would be necessary to also do comparative studies between JCC and Union in terms of their effectiveness to represent workers' rights because these two employee voice mechanisms co-exist in the tea industry despite the fact that tea estates prefer using JCC to Union and the Union, which is known as Planters Agricultural Workers Union (PAWU) is said to be dormant in action.

Furthermore, there is need to do comparative studies of JCC practices between tea industry and another industry different from tea so that lessons and good practices from the two sides are drawn and compared for replicating purposes.

Finally, another potential area of research would be to assess the impact of Human Resource practices on the JCC performance in the tea industry.

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APPENDIX: A

AN INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS FOR HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGERS

INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of the interview is to obtain information on the role JCC plays in promoting employee welfare. The interview will take the next 45 minutes. The information provided will be kept confidentially and only be used for research purposes.

1. (a)	How do you ensure that JCC objectives are publicised and known to JCC members and entire employees?
(b)	What measures are in place to ensure that JCC objectives balance the interests of the organisation and those of employees?
2.	What issues are discussed during JCC and management consultative meetings?
3. (a)	Describe how JCC views are taken on board by management when making final decisions on employees' welfare?
3. (b)	What employee welfare issues do management have prerogative to make decisions on without regard to JCC input?

3. (c)	How can you describe the JCC ability to influence management decisions on employee matters?
4.	Explain the process of JCC elections?
5.	Explain more about JCC and management consultative meetings in terms of numerical membership of both sides, frequency of meetings and how meetings are chaired?
6. (a)	Explain how the consultation process between JCC and management is executed on all matters affecting employees before any decision is made?
(b)	What support does management provide to JCC practices that help its endeavours to promote employee welfare?
7. (a)	How is the agenda for JCC and management consultative meetings initiated?
(b)	How does management handle decisions on issues it has line of thinking different from JCC?

8. (a)	What are the main strengths of JCC practices in promoting employee welfare?
(b)	Explain the main weaknesses of JCC practices to promote employee welfare?
9.	What could be done to improve the practices of JCC so that it is more effective to promote employee welfare?

END OF QUESTIONS, THANK YOU FOR YOUR PRECIOUS TIME!!!

APPENDIX: B

AN INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS FOR MAIN JCC MEMBERS

INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of the interview is to obtain information on the role JCC plays in promoting employee welfare. The interview will take the next 45 minutes. The information provided will be kept confidentially and only be used for research purposes.

1(a)	As a JCC member, what do you know about JCC objectives?
(b)	To what extent are the JCC objectives taking on board the interest of both the employer and employees?
2(a)	What issues are discussed during JCC and management consultative meetings?
(b)	What issues that affect employee welfare are never discussed during JCC and Management consultative meeting?
3(a)	What employee welfare issues are decided by both JCC and Management?

(b)	Which employee welfare issues are solely decided by management?
4 (a)	How does management ensure that JCC has input on issues of strategic importance such as investment, budget plan, acquisition and other ventures?
(b)	How do you assess JCC contributions towards management decisions on matters that affect employees?
5	What support does management provide to JCC practices that help its endeavours to promote employee welfare?
6	Describe how JCC and Management consultative meetings are conducted in terms of numerical membership of both sides and how meetings are chaired?
7 (a)	Describe the process on how JCC members are elected?
(b)	To what extent is JCC consulted when management is pursuing issues that affect employees?

8 (a)	How is the agenda for the consultation meetings initiated?
(b)	How often are JCC and management consultative meetings held per annum?
(c)	Explain how consultative meetings aid to improve the welfare of employees?
9 (a)	Explain how JCC influences management in decision making processes on matters concerning employees?
(b)	How do you assess the power of JCC to represent employees' welfare before management?
10 (a)	Describe the main strength of JCC to promote employee welfare?
(b)	Explain the weaknesses of JCC practices to promote employee welfare?

11	In your opinion, what should be done to make JCC more effective to fairly represent employees' welfare matters before management?

END OF QUESTIONS, THANK YOU FOR YOUR PRECIOUS TIME!!!

APPENDIX: C

INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS FOR WORKERS NOT IN THE MAIN JCC MEMBERSHIP-FOCUSED GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD).

INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of the interview is to obtain information on the role JCC plays in promoting employee welfare. The interview discussions will take the next 45 minutes. The information provided will be kept confidentially and only be used for research purposes.

1	What are the objectives of the JCC as far as you know?
2	To what extent are you satisfied with JCC practices in representing workers welfare matters before management?
3	How does JCC consult employees on their needs before meeting the management?
4	What is your opinion on the way JCC relays feed-back from management to employees regarding employees' welfare issues submitted before management?

5	What do you know about the way JCC members are elected?
6	In your opinion, how do you assess the ability of JCC to influence management on final decision making regarding employees' welfare matters?
7	Overall, how do you rate the effectiveness of JCC to promote employees' welfare?
8	What are the main strengths of JCC in promoting employees' welfare?

9	What are the weaknesses of JCC in promoting employees' welfare?
10	Provide any suggestions as to what could be done to improve the JCC practices so that it becomes an effective employee voice mechanism?

END OF OUR GROUP DISCUSSIONS. THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR PRECIOUS TIME.

**RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS AS IDENTIFIED BY RESPONDENT LABELS -JCC MEMBERS
INTERVIEWED/NON JCC MEMBERS IN FGD AND HRM INTERVIEWED**

		JCC MEMBERS PER TEA ESTATES			
		SATEMWA	NCHIMA	NAMING'OMBA	OVERALL TOTAL
RESPONDENT LABELS		KAJA	EVAKA	JADA	
		GICHA	ELIGO	MATA	
		CAKA	BEBI	SIJO	
		JACHA	WIJU	CHITHO	
		SMAGHA	RAMU	AFRA	
TOTAL	5	5	5	15	
		NON JCC MEMBERS IN FGD PER TEA ESTATES			
		SATEMWA	NTCHIMA	NAMING'OMBA	OVERALL TOTAL
LABELS		Kk	Aa	A	
		lL	Bb	B	
		Mm	Cc	C	
		nN	Dd	D	
		oO	Ee	E	
		pP	Ff	F	
		qQ	Gg	G	
		rR	Hh	H	
		sS	Ii	I	
		tT	Jj	J	
		aA	Kk	K	
		bB	Ll	L	
		Cc	Mm	M	
		dD	Nn	N	
		eE	Oo	O	
		fF	Pp	P	
		gG	Qq	Q	
	hH	Rr	R		
	iI	Ss	S		
	jJ	Tt	T		
TOTAL	20	20	20	60	
		HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICERS INTERVIEWED			
		SATEMWA	NCHIMA	NAMING'OMBA	OVERALL TOTAL
RESPONDENT LABELS		HRM OFFICER 2	HRM OFFICER 3	HRM OFFICER 1	
		1	1	1	3

