



**ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**ASSESSMENT ON THE ROLE OF TRADE UNION IN SAFEGUARDING  
MEMBER'S INTEREST: THE CASE OF ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES**

**BY**

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**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

**JANUARY, 2018**

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**ST.MARY'S UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
MBA PROGRAM, CONCENTRATION IN HRM**

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## **ENDORSEMENT**

This thesis paper is submitted to St. Mary's university, School of graduate studies for examination with my approval as a university advisor.

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## **Statement of Declaration**

I, Yayeherad Abebe, declare that this research entitled “Assessment on the role of trade union in safeguarding member’s interest, the case of Ethiopian airlines” is done with my own effort. I have produced it independently except the close advice, guidance and suggestions of my research advisor. I assure that this study has not been submitted for any scholarly award in this or any other university. It is offered for the partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Business Administration (MBA in Human Resource Management).

Yayeherad Abebe Berhanu  
Name

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Signature

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Date

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS/ABBRIVATION**

EAL	–	Ethiopian Air Lines
HR	–	Human Resource
CELU	–	Confederation of Ethiopian Labor Unions
MOLSA	–	Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs
IATA	–	International Air Transport Association
ICAO	–	International Civil Aviation Organization

## **Abstract**

*Safeguarding the rights and interest of members is the pillar and vital role of the any trade union. Trade Unions organize for protection and promotion of the interests of their members in particular and workers in general. It generally pursues the broad objective of steady employment, which is something the employer may not be able to guarantee to the workers. The general objective of this study was to assess the role of trade union in safeguarding member's interest in case of Ethiopian airlines basic trade union along with identifying challenges of the trade union and evaluating the contemporary roles of the trade union. The researcher used a descriptive research design basing on the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches for stated objectives. The study was conducted at Ethiopian airlines basic trade union. The target population for this study was total shop stewards of the union, a total sample of 105 stewards who are in five business units of the airline were used. The researcher used adopted and modified questionnaire and interview guides as research tool to collect data from the respondents. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics especially frequency, tables and percentages, were used to show the extent to which the respondents agreed or disagreed with the statements in the questionnaire. Data presentation was presented in tables, charts and narration form. The study is significant to other researchers as it will provide insight on identifying basic roles of a union, evaluating contemporary roles of a union like advanced welfare activities, education and research which the trade union in Ethiopian airlines is weaken. Major challenges of a union also identified and evaluated on this study, such as operational, management and financial challenges with their overall impact on discharging the very existence purpose of a union safeguarding the rights and interest of members. Furthermore, the findings will enable Ethiopian airlines basic trade union to understand the perceptions of members to the unions to make informed decisions on employees' terms and conditions of service for reasonable Collective Bargaining Agreements. The findings will also strengthen the relationship between the trade union executives and members during different activities that were developed. Recommendation also provided on this study for union in order to enabled the union the effectively accomplish its roles both basic and contemporary. Based on the research the union shall establish effective communication channel like website, newsletters and e-newspapers in order to become effective and efficient communication link between members, management and members, and other stake holders with members.*

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

Trade Unions are integral part of any organization. Whatever organization it may be, big or small, private or public; trade unions do exist to safeguard the interest of the employees working therein. A trade union also improves the living and the working conditions of the employees according to Paragshir (2013,11).In most cases, as individual workers were economically weak and possessed low bargaining power, they were exposed to exploitation and their lives and working conditions became so poor over time. Trade unionism is a response to such situations which forced workers to protect themselves from exploitation and safeguarding their basic right in all matters in regards to industrial relation. A trade unions leadership bargains with the employer on behalf of its members on terms and conditions of employment. This may include negotiation of wages, work rules, complaint procedures, rules governing hiring, firing and promotion of workers, benefits, workplace safety and policies. Trade Unions also play a very vital role in industrial relations and peace which is a win-win both for the organization and employee. They are the middle ground players between the workers and the employer basically standing on the side of the workers. But now a day's different studies reveled that trade unions are becoming crippled to perform their very basic existing purpose effectively due to different reasons, In this paper, an attempt is going to be made to examine this current issue of how effective trade unions are playing their basic roles, their efficient discharging of contemporary roles like education, research and advanced welfare activities in order to safeguard the rights and interests of the members and employees in general of the organization focusing on Ethiopian Airlines Enterprise. Also as of the researcher overview there are no much studies are conducting on this area especially in contemporary roles of a union which lead us to significant knowledge gap such as what are they? And how effective are our existing trade unions in discharging this modern role. Finally, as the modern employment scenario is changing dynamically in this highly globalized era this research would contribute its own theoretical and practical knowledge to existing knowledge and experience in the area.

## **1.2 Background of the organization**

Ethiopian airline is flag carrier of Ethiopia which is providing or functioning in the airline industry for the past 70 plus years. Ethiopian Airlines was established in December 1945 and started operation in 1946, through this long years Ethiopian has become one of the continents leading carriers, unrivalled in Africa for efficiency and operational success. Operating at the forefront of technology, the airline has also become one of Ethiopia's major industries and a veritable institution in Africa. It commands a lion's share of the pan African network including the daily and double daily east-west flight across the continent.

Ethiopian airline currently serves more than 100 international and 35 domestic destinations operating the newest and youngest fleets. The major hub of Ethiopian Airlines is Addis Ababa Bole International Airport which has one of the largest traffic airports in Africa and the busiest airports in East Africa with a capacity of providing more than seven million international and domestic passengers each year. Ethiopian Airlines joined Star Alliance on December 13, 2011. At a ceremony held at Addis Ababa Ethiopian airlines headquarter the Star Alliance Chief Executive Board (CEB) welcomed Ethiopian Airlines as the Alliance's third carrier based on the African continent with South African air and Egypt air. Currently Ethiopian has more than 12 thousands employees excluding temporary employees.

The airline in its carrier passed so many challenging situations and today become one of the best airlines in Africa flying over fifty destinations. It operates in passenger's service, cargo operations, aircraft maintenance & repair and serving as one of ICAO certified aviation academy supporting operations like maintenance and training services for its own staff and others.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

A strong trade union is a guarantee of employees, industrial peace and makes for stability of industry. Any decision agreed upon collectively by workers is bound to command obedience and respect among the general body of workers and employers also cannot afford to treat such decisions in a light manner. They not only bring about improvement in the conditions of work, employment and wages of workers but also lead to great efficiency among workers and create a feeling of self-respect and confidence among them.

According to earlier research finding conducted in overall African trade unions (Hubert 2005, 108) trade unions are become either power less or compromising independence which led to frustration to join the unions. Employees are coming to believe that the unions are either created or imposed upon them not to protect them but to serve the management without having their own power or independence which led the trade union not to function in its fullest for safeguarding its member's interest. According to different scholars (Lucky 2010, 16) current trade unions shall effectively discharge both basic and contemporary roles of a union in order to enable them to stand in safeguarding their member's interest efficiently.

In all these, some trade unions of some organizations have attempted their best to stand on behalf of their members/employees and some of them have failed their mission for various reasons. Taking this general problem in the broader picture in to account, the case of Ethiopian Airlines basic trade union is assessed regarding its role in safeguarding its member's interest along with visible knowledge and practice gap in contemporary roles of a union in Ethiopian airlines basic trade union such as research, education and advanced welfare activities. To my knowledge, this research is one of the few researches carried out so far even if it's the area which needs huge research and study, which makes this research to contribute its part in filling the gap.

## 1.4 Research questions

The research attempted to answer the following basic research questions:

1. What are basic roles of Ethiopian airlines trade union?
2. What are contemporary roles of a trade union in Ethiopian airlines trade union?
3. What are the challenges of the trade union in Ethiopian airline to discharge its role in safeguarding its member's interest?

## 1.5 Research objectives

**-General objective:** - assessing the role of Ethiopian airlines basic trade union in safeguarding its member's interest

**-Specific objectives:**

- To examine the role of the trade union in safeguarding interests of its members
- To identify the contemporary roles of a trade union and contrasting with Ethiopian airlines basic trade union
- To identify the challenges of the trade union in discharging its roles

## 1.6 Significance of the Research

This study assessed the Role of trade Union in safeguarding member's interest is crucial for better industrial employment condition, well performing trade union and its result would help to provide significant information related to Industrial relation as a whole and in Ethiopian airlines. The study also serves as a criterion for the partial fulfillment of Master of Arts degree in the concentration of Human Resource Management and to show the contemporary roles of a trade union to make the necessary adjustment. In addition to the above help students in the field and practitioners as a reference material to get insight with regard to trade union roles as well as effectiveness. Finally the research also added to existing knowledge with the concept of role of trade unions in general and especially in the case of Ethiopian airlines.

## **1.7 Scope of the study**

The scope of this research study is limited to Ethiopian airlines head quarter. The study did not cover all domestic offices, outstation offices and the airline second hub in Lome', as most of the employees who are located at outstations are management staffs (Team Leaders, station Managers and Area managers).The scope limitation is directly related with time, budget and availability of resources.

## **1.8 Organization of the paper**

The paper has five chapters. The first chapter includes a general background of the topic by introducing the concept, the general and specific purposes/objectives, problem statement, and the scope of the paper and significance of the study.

The second chapter focused on discussion of reviewed relevant literatures including books, scholarly journals, and articles of both international and domestic.

The third chapter deals with the research design, the source of data, and the tools employed for gathering, sampling technique and sample size and the methods which the collected data's are analyzed and interpreted.

Fourth and fifth chapters of the paper present findings and results gather through questionnaires and interviews supporting with conclusion and some recommendations.

## **1.9 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations are expected to arise in any kind of research. This paper therefore takes into consideration of those ethical issues on formulating and clarification of the topic, design, access and use of data, analysis and report of the findings in a moral and responsible way. Participants were assured that the source of data collected would remain confidential and that anonymity will be maintained. Also with regard to interviewed trade union executives members they gave me the right to disclose their position and names. The integrity of all participants to the study shall be upheld with the objective and other processes of the study made explicit. The study shall use ways and methods of analysis and report the same in the manner that shall not be embarrassing, stressful, discomfoting, painful or harmful to the readers and the participants. The



study shall take proactive stance not to engage in fraudulent procedures that affect the study results neither shall it misuse the same. The researcher aims at maintaining responsible behavior and objectivity as much as possible in conducting the study. Thus, due attention has been given due attention in distributing and collecting questionnaires' as well as interview session.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 History, features and Roles of Trade union**

The expression industrial relations, one of the major part of it is, trade union, is used to express the nature of relationship between the employer and the employee in an industry or an organization. Where willing cooperation emanates from employees towards the achievement of organizational goal, there will be a good industrial relation.

According to Professor Davar, The concept of industrial relations has generally developed as a consequence of the industrial revolution as, prior to this, the master-servant relationship which existed was simple and of a personal nature. With the acceleration in industrialization, the relations aspect became complex and impersonal. (Davar: 1988, 257) Under the early factory system, the worker was looked upon as a commodity which could not be easily secured but also replaced. The attitude was that of considering the supply and demand position as in case of a commodity. As the employer was in a dominating situation, he/she dictates both the wages and the conditions of the services of the workers resulting in many industrial and social ills such as low wages, unduly long hours of work, poor working conditions and persecutions of trade union activity. The difficulty of the workers was miserable in most European countries during such a time and trade union leaders were persecuted and victimized. (Davar: 1988, 258).

A new awakening among the working class was brought about after the First World War and the industrial relations position took a new turn. Workers began to take retaliatory actions to help themselves to get a new deal. They began to strike, declare lock-outs, as a result of which, industrial war began (Davar: 1988, 258). At first, governments were very much reluctant to deal with the issue in a very smooth manner, the British government has attempted not to intervene to settle disputes neither did it nothing to ensure good industrial relations, however, when things started to go from worse to the worst and strikes had begun to stay much longer than expected, the government had started to establish committees of inquiry, and at last, for the first time, it enacted the famous Trade Disputes Act of 1929, followed by the 1947 Industrial Disputes Act,

which provided permanent machinery for settlement of disputes such as works committees, conciliation officers and industrial tribunals (Davar; 1988, 258).

According to the famous Black's law dictionary, a trade union is defined as "an organization formed to negotiate with employers, on behalf of workers collectively, about job-related issues such as salary, benefits, working hours and conditions" (Black: 2009, 1671). In fact, this is a definition which seems to be all rounded and purpose oriented. All legal definitions, in all cases, are purpose oriented as they intend to achieve a specific objective. When analyzing this definition, a trade union is a separate entity/organization different from its members having its own legal personality and capacity. The other important feature of a trade union, according to the above definition, is its primary purpose. The purpose of any trade union, among other things, is to negotiate with employers and other entities on behalf of and for the exclusive interests of their members; i.e. the workers/employees. And thirdly, the main issues about which these unions are to negotiate with the workers by representing the workers are job-related issues, not other purely political or any other non-work related matter. This is not to conclude that job-related matters will remain as purely socio-economic agendas always especially if they are not managed and settled properly and gently, there is a high probability that they could turn out to be political.

Another definition is provided by Robins and DeCenzo that a Trade Union is an organization of workers acting collectively, seeking to promote and protect its mutual interests through collective bargaining. (DeCenzo & Robins: 2005, 354) This definition by both scholars is not that much different from the above definition provided by the law dictionary that both literatures focused on three important points; i.e. organization, workers/employees and collective interest of the workers. Pursuant to Monique Marks and Jenny Fleming, Trade unions are among the most democratic organizations in our society, certainly more democratic in general than corporations, parliamentary parties and governments (Mark and Fleming: 1998). Here, both scholars are trying to argue in favor of the nature and process of trade union formation and their function as democratic because they are established, structured and empowered by the workers themselves. The following definition also describes the means by which Trade unions advance the interest of the workers: It is an organization based on membership of employees in various trades, occupations and professions, whose major focus is the representation of its members at the work

place and in the wider society. It particularly seeks to advance its interest through the process of rulemaking and collective bargaining. (Deset Abebe: 2013, 113).

Trade unions can be thought of as multipurpose organizations. They have, not only there to advance social justice agendas, but also to be narrowly concerned with their own vested interests. In recent decades, trade unions have displayed their vested interest face more often than they have revealed their social justice features. Bureaucratic conservatism has shaped much of the direction taken by the trade union movement in recent years.

The challenge for the trade union movement in the 21st century is for unions to overcome this conservatism and to reinvigorate and ‘redefine their role as a sword of justice’. Such a change is necessary and inevitable for two reasons (Mark and Fleming,: 1998, 4). First, engaging in more social justice issues provides unions with an opportunity for much needed revival. Second, through being involved in social justice issues, trade unions will increase their capacity to mobilize a broad range of civil society actors in pursuit of their public interest agendas.

Some scholars suggest that the trade union movement offers a social democratic alternative to global neo liberalism (Lambert, Adler and Webster: 2000, 42). But to be able to achieve these objectives, according to Margaret Levi, trade unions must be part of a major social movement in which organized labor plays a crucial role while acting as a reciprocal participant in a larger network of social activists.

An increasing number of unions – although still too few – are democratizing internally, engaging in issues of economic and social justice for others as well as themselves (Levi: 2003, 60). These authors are strongly arguing, by taking the current situation of the world and socioeconomic realities of the workers, that the role of trade unions should be, to the extent possible, broadened and should be able to incorporate other socio-economic factors affecting the lives and wellbeing of the workers which they represent. How unions identify themselves, what agendas they decide to promote and who they forge alliances with are all contingent on a number of factors. These include the political opportunity structure at the local, national and global level; the characteristics of union members and supporters; the extent to which unions are viewed as

valuable within networks of influence; the vision of union leaders; and, the frameworks of international regulatory organizations such as the International Labor Organization (Mark and Fleming: 1998, 5).

According to Robins and DeCenzo, individual workers usually join union for the reasons of higher wages and benefits, greater job security and to have an influence on the work rules (DeCenzo & Robins: 2005, 355) and (Puja Mondal, 2004, 14-16 Trade Unions).

In conclusion the following are the basic roles of trade unions according to Puja Mondal, 2004, Trade Unions

### **1. Increasing Co-operation and Well-being among Workers:**

The modern industry is complex and demands specialization in jobs. This results in extreme division of labor, which leads to the growth of individualism and development of impersonal and formal relationships. There is no common unifying bond among the workers. It is in this context that the trade unions come into the picture and they promote friendliness and unity among the workers. Besides this, the trade unions also discuss the problems, which are common to all the workers. It is a platform where workers come together and know each other. The trade unions also provide some kind of entertainment and relaxation to the workers.

### **2. Negotiating and Securing Facilities for Workers:**

Basically a trade union exists to negotiate on behalf of its members for betterment of their benefits and life in general with their employer. Most of the industrialists are not very keen on providing the facilities and proper working conditions, pay, working atmosphere to the workers. They are more interested in getting their work done to the maximum extent. In such conditions, trade unions fight on behalf of the workers and see that the facilities have been provided by the management.

### **3. Representation:**

According to Puja Mondal, 2004, Unions In present days, there are many industries, which have grown into giants. A single unit in a particular industry may employ hundreds of employees. Many times a worker or employee may not have a chance to see their managers. In this situation, the workers are not able to express their grievances before their employers, and even the

management does not know the difficulties faced by the workers. The trade unions play an important role in bringing to the notice of the employers the difficulties and grievances of the employees. They try to arrange face-to-face meetings and thus try to establish contacts between the employees and the employers.

#### **4. Trade Unions working for the Progress of the Employees:**

The trade unions try to improve the economic conditions of the workers by representing their cases to the employers and try to get adequate bonus, salary increment and different benefits to the workers. (Puja Mondal, 2004, Trade Unions)

#### **5. Safeguarding the Interests of the Workers:**

Most of the industries try to exploit the workers to the maximum. They do not provide any benefits such as increasing their wages, granting sick leaves, giving compensation in case of accidents, etc. The workers are not made permanent even after many years of service and in some cases they are removed from service summarily. The trade unions provide security to the employees in such situations.

## **2.2 Challenges of Trade union**

According to Lucky Clair Kisaka, 2010, the following were three basic challenges of trade unions especially in Africa:-

**1. Management challenges,** There are many challenges that face trade unions in their day to day operations. Having participated in the struggle for independence, trade unions are considered organizations that have the capacity to organize people, a capacity many governments would wish to control and keep checked. The government and employers look down upon trade unions and preconceive them as chaotic and irresponsible organizations whose major aim is to disrupt peace, order and good governance. This perception attracts government and employers interest in affairs and activities of trade unions. Political interference and intimidation has been a feature of the trade unions especially African Industrial Relations System, the activities of trade unions have occasionally attracted the attention of the political establishment, at times there has been no clear difference between trade unions leadership and the political leadership which affects unions independence. Trade union officials have at times doubled as politician and vice versa and this has tendered to be prejudicial to trade unionism. The core of industrial relations requires the

ability of management and unions to negotiate terms and conditions of employment relatively free of state control or intervention. This influence by government in industrial relations has been prompted by the states involvement in business and the fact that the state is the single largest employer and like any other employer, wishes to influence the type of industrial relations that. Trade unions operate under a number of statutes among them trade union Act, Trade Disputes act, employment act, workers compensation act among others.

**2. Operational challenges,** Globalization of the world economy has brought about heavy pressure on the local industries to become globally competitive. Heightened global competition has disposed enterprises to adopt greater flexibility - functional or numerical - in terms of labor utilization. Amongst the common functional flexibility employed by enterprises are the "broadening of job designs, mobility across tasks, enlarging the scope of individual skills, and extensive training and retraining programs. Numerical flexibility, on the other hand, entails practices such labor subcontracting, changing work hours, and hiring of casual, part-time, temporary and contract workers.

The consideration of these practices as a typical employment has become outdated such that it is now typical increasing numbers of people and now have gained "legitimacy and political support in the climate of economic liberalism" (Jose, 2000). Globalization has also affected how firms see their employees (Binghay, 2000). With the rising costs of production, management has embarked on creating cheap labor market to attain the objective of keeping low prices for their products while maintaining high profits, leading one to think that labor have become commodity and not a partner for progress. Another phenomenon that could be associated with globalization is the emergence of more sophisticated "DE collectivization" strategies on the part of employers. With intense competition, employers just could not afford any obstructions in their production processes, disposing them to adopt anti-union practices.

**3. Financial challenges,** The trade unions are increasingly faced with financial constraints emanating from the following factors, among others: loss of members as a result of organizational restructuring, leading to loss of revenue since trade unions depend on members' contributions in order to undertake their operations; splitting of the of the trade unions and mismanagement of funds by the union leaders (Central Organization of Trade Unions, 2009).

Workers' organizations are experiencing serious difficulties almost everywhere and are losing members. Few countries have unionization rates above 50 percent, while others have less than 20 percent of non-agricultural workers in unions. The Kenyan economy is largely agricultural based and therefore the working class has been small. This has adversely affected potential membership of unions and their capacity to bargain with employers on equal terms. Contents that without job security and with high unemployment, the result of course is that labor are cheaper and workers are hired and fired at will. Along with this, unions are undermined, not to mention the phenomenon of more and more cases of gross violation of labor rights and outright union busting.

### **2.3 Contemporary role of trade union**

In addition to their traditional bargaining activities, unions now have a newly acquired voice and representative function which matches the 21<sup>st</sup> century requirement. Many of them are trying to increase their value to workers by providing a variety of services to their members, as well as to the community to which they belong. Such services range from providing legal and financial advice to improving skills.

These new functions of trade unions (also called ancillary functions [Monappa, 2000]) can be categorized into the following groups:

**i. Communication:** In this modern age trade unions become additional, reliable and quick means of communication channel between employees, the enterprise and employees, between government and employees especially during change or amendment take place in existing government policies and proclamations. Many large unions publish a newsletter or a magazine, with the main aim of clarifying their policy or stance on certain principal issues, as well as to pass on information about their activities. In addition to the above they also give clarification to employee's regarding the company whenever structure change is happening, new workflow, systems and procedure in order to prevent their members from any misconception, confusion and lack of detail and real time information.

**ii. Advanced welfare activities:** Many unions are engaged in a number of welfare activities, such as providing housing, loan service and organizing cooperative societies to improve the quality of workers' lives. Members offered financial assistance during sudden death of themselves,



spouses or children, when member of the Union faces physical disability based on the recommendations by the concerned medical board as to the percentage of disability, the unions provide financial assistance, Members of the union shall be entitled to receive loan during holiday, For an employee whose contract is terminated unfairly the union pay financial subsidy of his/her monthly gross salary regularly and handle the litigation in court proceedings by the union's advocate. Currently unions are working aggressively to maximize their member's financial needs along with psychological assistance.

**iii. Education:** Education helps to make workers aware of their surrounding environments. Unions make efforts to launch educational programs for workers to enhance their knowledge of the work environment and to inform them about issues concerning them, particularly those regarding their rights and responsibilities and regarding procedures and systems that exist in the workplace for redressing grievances.

**iv. Research:** Union negotiators need updated information to be systematically collected and analyzed at the bargaining table. They also need to back up their wage demands with knowledge of the industry, of productivity, and of comparative industry practices. Many unions conduct their own research to this effect, laying emphasis on practical problems, especially day-to-day affairs at work.

## **2.4 Overview of the Trade union**

Ethiopian airlines basic trade union had been established on 18/03/1955. It is one of the three major trade unions which played pivotal role for the establishment of the Confederation of Ethiopian Transport Workers Union /CETU/. Currently it is one of the sole renowned veteran and the largest trade union in our country. It has Members including Cock Pit Crews, Aircraft Technicians, Finance, Administration, Commercial and other ground staffs of Ethiopian Airlines employees. The union is solely administered by workers, on voluntary basis. It has been established in order to prevent problems that could be encountered by employees, improve working conditions and create forum in order to enable them have freedom of expression. The Union has a legal recognition from Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. It is a member of the Confederation of Ethiopian Transport Workers Union /CETU/ and Transport Communication Industry Workers Unions Federation/TCIWUF and International Transport Workers` Federation/ITF/.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHDOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research design**

For the purpose of this study descriptive research design was chosen. According to Neuman (2000), descriptive research is a type of research that provides an accurate portrayal of characteristics of a particular individual, situation, or group. These studies are a means of discovering new meaning, describing what exists, determining the frequency with which something occurs, and categorizing information. In other words, the descriptive research attempts to describe, explain and interpret conditions of the present i.e. “what is”. The purpose of a descriptive research is to examine a phenomenon that is occurring at a specific place(s) and time.

A descriptive research is concerned with conditions, practices, structures, differences or relationships that exist, opinions held processes that are going on or trends that are evident. The descriptive research method refers to the method used to describe data and characteristics used to describe the population. The purpose of using the descriptive research method is to acquire accurate, factual, systematic data that can provide you with an actual picture of the data set that you are viewing.

As it's clearly defined the purpose of this study is to look an answer for three basic questions related to roles of trade union in safeguarding members interests, What is the role of Ethiopian airlines trade union in playing its very role, safeguarding its member's interest, What are the challenges of the trade union in Ethiopian airline to discharge its role in safeguarding its member's interest and What are the contemporary roles of trade union contrasting with Ethiopian airlines.

As Newman stated descriptive study is one in which information is collected without changing the environment (i.e., nothing is manipulated). It is used to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomena to describe "what exists" with respect to variables or conditions

in a situation. The methods involved range from the survey which describes the status quo and tries to answer what.

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used, The mixed methods approach was used in this study because it enables to make investigations with prediction, narration of events, comparisons and drawing of conclusions based on the information obtained from relatively large and representative samples and of the target population. According to Trochim (2005), mixed method research is any research that uses multiple research methods to take of the unique advantages that each method offers.

According to Creswell (2009), the time-intensive nature of analyzing both text and numeric data and incorporate elements of both qualitative and quantitative approaches/combines or associates both qualitative and quantitative forms characteristics of this paradigm. Creswell (2009), also states that one advantage of mixed methods is opportunity to employ both open and closed-ended questions as well as multiple forms of data collection possibilities.

Moreover, mixed method research involves combining in single study techniques, methods, approaches and languages of both quantitative and qualitative tradition (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Hence, incorporating mixed methods into each action research cycle may help researchers secure a more systematic approach to action/intervention and provides a more solid ground for promoting sustainability of change.

By capitalizing on the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods, mixed methods can help ensure better transferability of the action research study results to other contexts and community settings.

### **3.2 Source of data**

As the study analyzed both primary and secondary data, the researcher used active members and executives of the trade union as a primary data sources through questionnaires and interview respectively. Secondary data sources are books, journals, articles and other research studies which were conducted on related topic.

### 3.3 Data collection instruments

With respect to this, Creswell (2003) stated that employing multiple data collection instruments help the researcher to combine, strengthen and amend some of the inadequacies. The data for the study were obtained using both quantitative and qualitative data from primary and secondary sources. Questionnaires and interviews were used as data collection instrument from the participants. The instruments were adopted and implemented after some modification from 2015G.C published research book written by Makwena Manamela (PhD.) called trade unions.

The questionnaire only includes closed ended questions. It is comprised of 3 parts. The first part deals with the demographic information about the respondent. In the absence of the name of the respondent, there are questions regarding the gender, age group, educational level, working business unit and years of work experience in the company. These data are to be used for analyzing survey responses with respect to patterns of age; gender, educational levels, and works Experiences. This is because there might be some kind of indicative correlation between the responses and the demographic status of respondents.

The second part of the questionnaire contains 09 closed ended questions. The major themes of these questions rely on the basic roles of the trade union. The basic roles of the trade union is described in relation to Increasing Co-operation and Well-being among Workers, negotiating and securing facilities for workers, representation, union's contribution in and for the progress of the employees and safeguarding the interest of employees.

The third part of the questionnaire contains 04 closed ended questions. The themes of these questions rely on contemporary roles of trade union. Contemporary roles of trade union are described in relation to advanced welfare activities, education, research and communication.

In total the questionnaire contains 13 close ended questions. Each question is presented with 5 options of rating, so that the agreement and disagreement of the respective respondent with the statement provided is to be indicated by the rate chosen.

### **3.4 Study population**

The population that the scope of the study covers is 143 shop stewards who are located at different business units of the company. Since Ethiopian airlines has five main business units, (Ethiopian Cargo, Ethiopian Catering, Aviation Academy, Ethiopian maintenance & Repair Overhaul (MRO), Ground services) the sample size is stated in terms of numbers of shop stewards of the basic trade union which is drawn from the total number of the stewards in this five business units.

### **3.5 Sampling Technique**

As Ethiopian airlines has five main divisions (Ethiopian Cargo, Ethiopian Catering, Aviation Academy, Ethiopian maintenance & Repair Overhaul (MRO), Ground services).The sample size is stated in terms of numbers of shop stewards of the basic trade union which is drawn from the total number stewards in this five main divisions. The number of total shop stewards is 143.

Accordingly stratified random sampling is applied in this study which allows the researcher can representatively sample even the smallest and most inaccessible subgroups in the population like aviation academy in this research. Moreover it gave the researcher to sample the rare extremes of the given population. In this research higher level of caution is taken to avoid overlapping of strata during questioner distribution. Having overlapping subgroups will grant some individuals higher chances of being selected as subject. This completely negates the concept of stratified sampling as a type of probability sampling.

### **3.6 Sample size determination**

There are 143 shop stewards in the trade union of Ethiopian airlines. Hence, all the stewards of the union are taken as the population of the study. The researcher applied a sample size determination formula to calculate the sample size. Accordingly, 105 stewards were taken as a sample for the study. Accordingly the representation of each stratum (Ethiopian Cargo, Ethiopian Catering, Aviation Academy, Ethiopian maintenance & Repair Overhaul (MRO), Ground services) is respected and allocated as shown below. The population group which five business units were taken as strata.

The sample of this research is calculated by using Taro Yamane (Yamane, 1973) formula with 95% confidence level.

Total sample size formula,

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where: n = sample size required for the study

N = number of total population of the study

e = allowable error (%) 0.05

$$n = \frac{143}{1 + 143(0.05)^2}$$

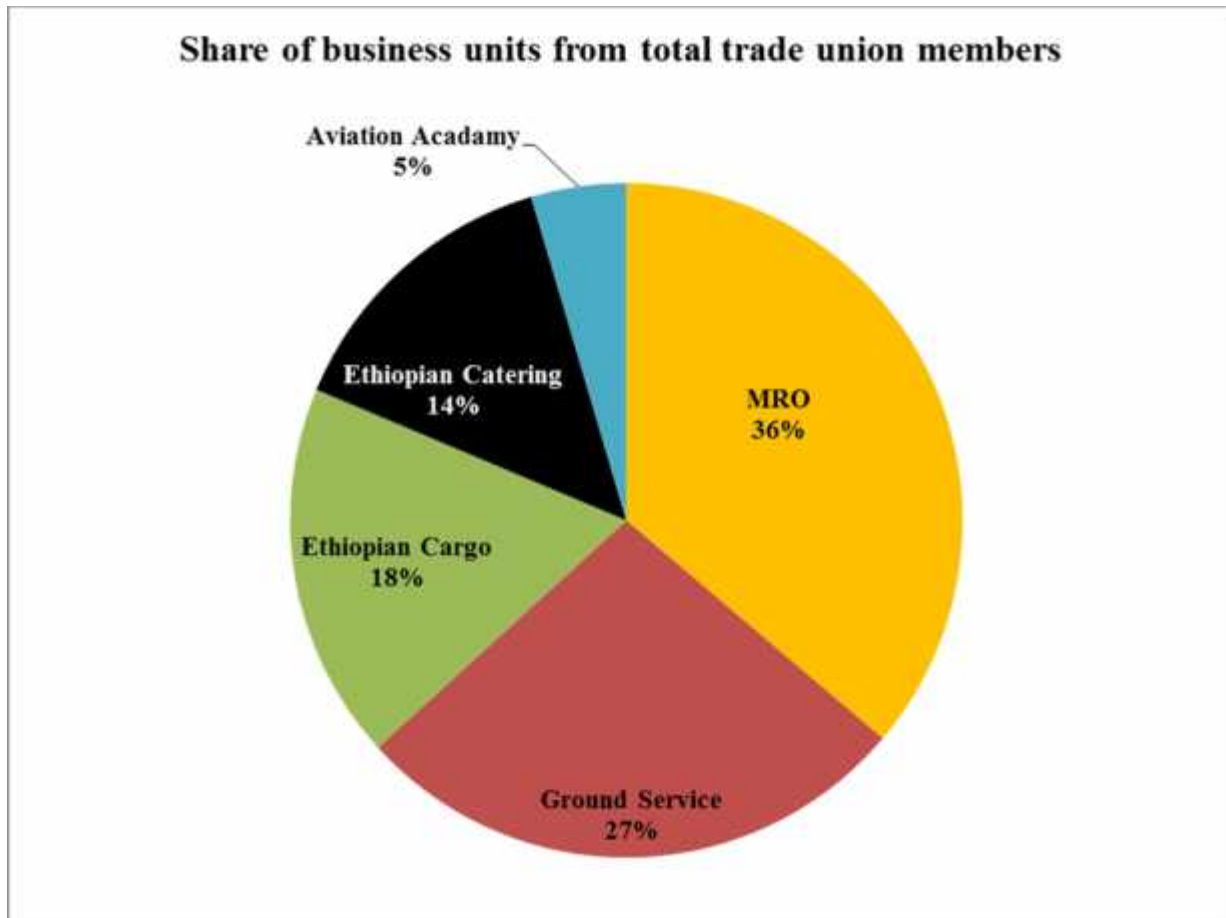
$$n = 143/1.357$$

$$n = 105$$

**Table 1 the number of stewards participated on the research in each business unit.**

<b>Number of stewards on each Business unit</b>	
MRO	38
Ground Service	27
Ethiopian Cargo	18
Ethiopian Catering	14
Aviation Academy	8

**Pie 1 Share of business units from total trade union members**



### **3.7 Method of data analysis**

According to Marshall and Ross man (1999), data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and interpretation to the mass of collected data. It involves the coding, editing and cleaning of data in preparation for processing. The completed questionnaires were received, checked for completeness and edited for correctness. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data in this study with frequency and percentage as the main tool using Advanced excel and SPSS for data analysis and presentation.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

The qualitative data generated from the study guide were categorized in themes in accordance with research objective and reported in narrative form along with quantitative presentation. These analyses were used to address specific objective III.

### **Quantitative Analysis**

Quantitative data was analyzed mainly through the use of frequency distribution and percentage. These analyses were used to address specific objective I and II. With the help of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and advanced excel the findings were presented in the form of percent-ages, frequency distribution tables, bar charts and pie charts. The data was summarized according to the study's specific objectives.

### **3.8 Reliability and Validity**

Reliability refers to the capacity of the results of research to stand up to re- testing. For example, estimating a person's age by asking his or her friends would be less reliable than asking the person or checking the birth certificate. Repeatability of the study also indicates the extent of reliability. Coolican (1994) succinctly states that reliability 'refers to a measure's consistency in producing similar results on different but comparable occasions'. If research is said to be reliable, this means that if it is replicated (repeated under identical research conditions), identical results will be achieved. Reliability is important if generalizations are to be made. If researchers can establish that their research is reliable there is less risk of their taking a chance pattern or trend exhibited by their sample (the group being studied) and using it to make inferences or assumptions about the population as a whole. (Churton & Brown 2010, 209).

Validity refers to the extent to which the results of research provide a true picture of what is being studied. There are numerous yardsticks for determining validity: face validity, criterion-related validity, and content validity and construct validity. If research is said to be valid, this means that it is really measuring what it is intended to measure and gives an accurate insight into the research area that is, it 'mirrors' reality. Validity is important if researchers are seeking to obtain an in-depth insight into individuals, small groups or situations. If researchers can establish that their research is valid, they can be confident that their findings really do portray the



uniqueness of the issue being studied. If the research lacks validity, this means that the researchers cannot guarantee that their findings reflect the truth. (Churton & Brown 2010, 211; Earl Babbie 1989, 127)

In order to ascertain the validity of the instrument, the researcher recognized the need to involve personnel that are knowledgeable enough to really determine whether this research work will be able to test that it purports to test; accordingly the researcher adopted and modified the research instruments after reviewing literature and consulting experts in the field. Moreover and most importantly the advisor evaluated and ensured that the addresses of the study questions.

### **3.9 Limitation of the Study**

The serious limitation that the writer of this research study faced is related to literatures, of course, as the researcher has said on pervious chapters in the paper, the area is rich in literatures regarding the general concepts of the trade unions. But there are no much books or scholarly written and published journals on the history and current practice, contemporary roles and challenges of trade union in Africa specifically in Ethiopia and similar or related research papers on the area. The writer has used and refer few literatures written on the area.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

In this chapter results were discussed and analyzed which are collected from the survey participants and interviewed trade union executives. The survey is employed with the objective of getting firsthand information to be used for analysis and drawing of conclusion based on the assessment on the role of trade unions in safeguarding members' interest in case of Ethiopian Airlines Enterprise. One of the major techniques employed to collect data for this study was using questionnaire response along with interview questions. 105 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to potential respondents existing at shop steward levels. And interview was applied to obtain relevant information from the union executives.

#### 4.1 Demographic characteristics

The characteristics of respondents include the gender, age group, educational level, and work experience of each respondents. The following table provides the demographic characteristics of respondents.

**Table 2: Demographic characteristic of respondents**

No.	Variables	Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Gender	Male	62	65%
		Female	34	35%
<b>Total</b>			<b>96</b>	<b>100%</b>
2	Age (in years)	18-25 years	17	17%
		26-35 years	41	40%
		36-45 years	29	28%
		46-55 years	11	11%
		Above 55 years	4	4%
<b>Total</b>			<b>102</b>	<b>100%</b>

3	Educational Level	Diploma	14	13%
		Bachelor degree	67	64%
		Master's degree	21	20%
		Others	3	3%
<b>Total</b>			<b>105</b>	<b>100%</b>
4	Division	MRO	38	36%
		Ground Service	27	26%
		Ethiopian Cargo	18	17%
		Ethiopian Catering	14	13%
		Aviation Academy	8	8%
<b>Total</b>			<b>105</b>	<b>100%</b>
5	Work experience in the company (in years)	1-5 years	10	10%
		6-10 years	29	28%
		11-15 years	45	43%
		Above 15 years	21	20%
<b>Total</b>			<b>105</b>	<b>100%</b>

Results show that most respondents were male (65%) and female employees accounted for on 35%. 9 respondents didn't answer this question (Table 2 item 1). This possibly would show us that the involvement of female members in steward's levels should be more encouraged.

The leading members in the union in terms of their age group (Table 2 item 2) are 26-35 years which accounted 40 % of the members, Followed by 36-45 years in reference of their age group. The implication for this result is that as Africa is a youngest continent and it's a same story here in Ethiopia in regard of total population age group it's due to their lions share in working force group. Furthermore most of the employees who are above 46 years held management position which automatically led them to resign from labor union membership. Also as the researcher's overview it might have some implication with the job security, probability of disputes arise is more on younger group than the aged ones.

84 percent of the participant had first degree and above in their educational history which implies that their contribution for the trade union in several aspects would be valuable and makes the union strong as education makes people to understand themselves, their surroundings , organization and general environment in better ways (Table 2 item 3).

Five business unites in Ethiopian airlines has different size in terms of their employees. Ethiopian MRO has the highest share of employees followed by Ground Service, Ethiopian

cargo, Ethiopian catering and aviation academy. According to the number of employees in each division, Ethiopian airlines basic trade union has portrayed its stewards according to the business unit size. It enables the union to have appropriate and fair representation on all business units (Table 2 item 4).

The biggest share of the stewards accounted 11-15 years of experience followed by 6-10 years which allows the stewards to be more familiar with the organizational culture, the union progress and the overall situation of the airlines. Hence, it will contribute its role in providing effective bargaining points to the union executives (Table 2 item 5).

#### 4.2 Data analysis related to research objective

The following section deals with the comprehensive analysis, discussion of the data gathered via questionnaires, interview and review of related literature and documents in line with research questions and research objectives. Furthermore, this chapter includes the discussion regarding the challenges of a trade union in safeguarding member's interest, basic and contemporary roles of in case of Ethiopian airlines basic trade union.

#### 4.3 Assessment on the basic role of Ethiopian airlines basic trade union

Table 3: Perceived basic role of increasing cooperation & well-being among employees

<b>Increasing cooperation and well-being among employees</b>				
<b>No.</b>	<b>Variables</b>	<b>Scale</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	The trade union in Ethiopian Airlines is playing significant importance in increasing cooperation and well-being among employees.	Strongly Agree	<b>61</b>	<b>58.1%</b>
		Agree	<b>33</b>	<b>31.4%</b>
		Neutral	<b>11</b>	<b>10.5%</b>
		Disagree		
		Strongly Disagree		
<b>Total</b>			<b>105</b>	<b>100%</b>
2	The union has a significant role in creating platform to establish unifying bond among members.	Strongly Agree	<b>43</b>	<b>41.7%</b>
		Agree	<b>51</b>	<b>49.5%</b>
		Neutral	<b>9</b>	<b>8.7%</b>
		Disagree		
		Strongly Disagree		
<b>Total</b>			<b>103</b>	<b>100%</b>

Almost all respondents (90.4%) provided positive reply on the trade union contribution in order to increase cooperation and well-being among employees. 89.5 % of the respondents agrees that the trade union in Ethiopian airlines is playing its role towards It. 91.2 % of the respondents sees the trade union as a good plat form in order to create bond among members in this very individualistic work environment. The modern industry is complex and demands specialization in jobs. This results in extreme division of labor, which leads to the growth of individualism and development of impersonal and formal relationships. There is no common unifying bond among the workers. It is in this context that the trade unions come into the picture and they promote friendliness and unity among the workers. Besides this, the trade unions also discuss the problems, which are common to all the workers. It is a platform where workers come together and know each other. The trade unions also provide some kind of entertainment and relaxation to the workers according to Puja Mondal, 2004, Trade Unions.

**Table 4 Perceived basic role of Negotiating and Securing facilities for workers**

<b>Negotiating and Securing facilities for workers</b>				
<b>No.</b>	<b>Variables</b>	<b>Scale</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	The union works with the management for the timely provision of necessary facilities and equipment's.	Strongly Agree	28	26.7%
		Agree	41	39.0%
		Neutral	17	16.2%
		Disagree	19	18.1%
		Strongly Disagree		
<b>Total</b>			<b>105</b>	<b>100%</b>
2	The trade union is effectively participating in collective bargaining process.	Strongly Agree	12	11.5%
		Agree	31	29.8%
		Neutral	23	22.1%
		Disagree	38	36.5%
		Strongly Disagree		
<b>Total</b>			<b>104</b>	<b>100%</b>

More than half (53.5 %) of the respondents positively reply on the trade union role of negotiating and securing facilities for workers. Even if 65.7% of the respondents appreciated the trade union contribution for the provision of necessary facilities and equipment's in collaboration with the

management 18.1 % of the respondents indicated that there has to be a way that the union should go in this regard. Regarding the union’s effectiveness in the collective bargaining process 36.5 % of respondents disagree with its participation. Bargaining power has been defined as the ability to induce an opponent to accept an agreement on one's own terms.

In economic terms, a party's bargaining power depends on that party's ability to impose costs on the other side for failure to reach agreement while minimizing the party's own costs of disagreement. In collective bargaining, the union's bargaining power depends on its ability to inflict costs on the employer through lost sales from a strike or other collective action while minimizing the costs of the collective action to their membership in lost wages and jobs. The employer's bargaining power depends on its ability to minimize its costs from the collective action while maximizing the costs of the collective action on the union members.

**Table 5 Perceived basic role of representation of members**

<b>Representation</b>				
<b>No.</b>	<b>Variables</b>	<b>Scale</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	The trade union plays an important role in bringing difficulties and grievances of members to managements notice timely and effectively.	Strongly Agree	23	21.9%
		Agree	69	65.7%
		Neutral	13	12.4%
		Disagree		
		Strongly Disagree		
<b>Total</b>			<b>105</b>	<b>100%</b>
2	The members of management of the trade union are trusted and well known by members of the trade union.	Strongly Agree	5	4.8%
		Agree	41	39.4%
		Neutral	27	26.0%
		Disagree	31	29.8%
		Strongly Disagree		
<b>Total</b>			<b>104</b>	<b>100%</b>

According to the respondents (87.6%) the trade union in Ethiopian airlines plays important role in bringing difficulties and grievances of members to the management attention timely and effectively. Also on the researcher’s observation on the issues that the trade union is dealing currently almost all of them are current and recent. For example restructure in the company was

conducted last month and is almost in its implementation stage, which the members brought grievances on the issue for the union. The union brought the issue for the management notice.

In the other hand only 44.2% of the respondents agree with that the members of management of the trade union are trusted and well known by members of the trade union. Which indicates that almost one third of the employees are (29.8) disagree with their trustworthiness and well known by members. In this aspect the trade union shall has to do more aggressively.

**Table 6 Perceived basic role of Union’s works for the Progress of the Employees**

<b>Trade Unions works for the Progress of the Employees</b>				
<b>No.</b>	<b>Variables</b>	<b>Scale</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	The trade union is working for the Progress of the Employees in order to improve the economic conditions.	Strongly Agree	11	10.5%
		Agree	27	25.7%
		Neutral	19	18.1%
		Disagree	31	29.5%
		Strongly Disagree	17	16.2%
<b>Total</b>			<b>105</b>	<b>100%</b>

Regarding the trade Union in the Ethiopian Airlines is working for the Progress of the Employees in order to improve the economic conditions; around half of the respondents (45.7%) of respondents disagree on the above statement. According to Puja Mondal 2004, trade unions, the trade unions should highly participate to improve the economic conditions of the workers by representing their cases to the employers and try to get adequate bonus, salary increment and different benefits to the workers. In contrary to this the trade union has unsatisfactory participation on this aspect.

**Table 7 Perceived basic role of safeguarding the interests of workers**

<b>Safeguarding the Interests of the Workers</b>				
<b>No.</b>	<b>Variables</b>	<b>Scale</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	The union has firm standing on protection of interests of employees in terms of improving job security for employees’.	Strongly Agree	21	20.2%
		Agree	54	51.9%
		Neutral	29	27.9%
		Disagree		
		Strongly Disagree		
<b>Total</b>			<b>104</b>	<b>100%</b>
2	The existence of trade union positively contributes in safeguarding the rights and interests of the members	Strongly Agree	48	45.7%
		Agree	51	48.6%
		Neutral	6	5.7%
		Disagree		
		Strongly Disagree		
<b>Total</b>			<b>105</b>	<b>100%</b>

In safeguarding the interest of the workers, 83.2 % of the respondents agree on the above main role of any union. One of the basic challenges in Africa labor market is that specifically in Ethiopia scenario the supply is much higher than the supply which gives the employer more bargaining power than the employee. In addition to this it also creates job insecurity for the workers. That is why the trade union is needed for insuring improved job security in the enterprise. Almost none of the respondents disagree with the trade union in Ethiopian airlines has not positively contributes in safeguarding the rights and interests of its members.

#### **4.4 Contemporary roles of Ethiopian airlines basic trade union**

**Table 8 Perceived contemporary role of communication among different stake holders**

<b>Communication</b>				
<b>No.</b>	<b>variables</b>	<b>Scale</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	The union is working effectively as communication channel between members, management, government and other stake holders via website, newsletter or other Medias.	Strongly Agree		
		Agree	6	5.8%
		Agree	24	23.1%
		Neutral	21	20.2%
		Disagree	53	51.0%
	Strongly Disagree			
<b>Total</b>			<b>104</b>	<b>100%</b>



In modern trade unions, trade union's serve as good communication channel between members, management and members, members and government. On this regard the trade union in Ethiopian airlines is not working effectively according to 51% of the respondents. Only 23.1% of employees agree with it. Even if the union has its own website it has no updated and current information. Other than this the union is not using other Medias like newsletter or newspapers to reach its members. At this very dynamic and volatile environment information is power; creating up-to-date awareness and providing latest information should be one of the roles the trade union focuses. Such activity helps the members to cope up with the changing law, standards and procedures.

**Table 9 Perceived contemporary role of advanced welfare activities**

Advanced welfare activities				
No.	Variables	Scale	Frequency	Percentage
1	The union is participating in better welfare activities (providing housing, loan service etc...).	Strongly Agree		
		Agree	35	33.7%
		Neutral	21	20.2%
		Disagree	48	46.2%
		Strongly Disagree		
<b>Total</b>			<b>104</b>	<b>100%</b>

The other activity that our modern time trade unions are engaged is better (advanced) welfare activity. They started providing housing and mortgage for their members and it is becoming contemporary role of trade unions. 46.2 % of the employees disagree with regard to above stated role implementation in Ethiopian airlines basic trade union. 33.7% of the employees agree with this activity. The union provided 2000 birr loan for Ethiopian New Year, Easter and Eid holidays which is paid throughout the year with no interest but the union has to make itself parallel to upcoming contemporary duties and roles of the union by enabling itself financially.

**Table 10 Perceived contemporary role of Education in trade unions**

Education				
No.	Variables	Scale	Frequency	Percentage
1	The union provides education or educational assistance for its members to capacity building	Strongly Agree		
		Agree		
		Neutral	<b>16</b>	<b>15.2%</b>
		Disagree	<b>89</b>	<b>84.8%</b>
		Strongly Disagree		
<b>Total</b>			<b>105</b>	<b>100%</b>

The other modern activity that current trade unions have a contemporary role is education provision to members. 84.8% of the respondents disagree with the question related to this item. Per the researchers observation the trade union in Ethiopian airlines is lagging behind both in provision of education or any assistance related to it. Enabling the union’s members to educate and update themselves would also help the union to increase bargaining power. As the business market require more educated and experienced employees having them and negotiate is considered to be a plus.

**Table 11 Perceived contemporary role of research in trade unions**

Research				
No.	Variables	Scale	Frequency	Percentage
1	The union conducts researches (such as back up their wage demands with knowledge of the industry, of productivity, and of comparative industry practices).	Strongly Agree		
		Agree	<b>19</b>	<b>18.3%</b>
		Neutral	<b>8</b>	<b>7.7%</b>
		Disagree	<b>77</b>	<b>74.0%</b>
		Strongly Disagree		
<b>Total</b>			<b>104</b>	<b>100%</b>

With regard to research, the trade union in Ethiopian airlines was and is not conducting a research according to 3/4<sup>th</sup> of respondents. The researcher tries to look if any research or assessment is conducted by the union, did not get any in the union’s archive. Union negotiators

need updated information to be systematically collected and analyzed at the bargaining table. They also need to back up their wage demands with knowledge of the industry, of productivity, and of comparative industry practices. Many unions conduct their own research to this effect, laying emphasis on practical problems, especially day-to-day affairs at work.

## **4.5 Summary of the interview**

One of the means to get information about situation or atmosphere is interviewing the right person or group. In order to address the third objective in this study and answer the third research question interviewing the trade union leaders is an ideal means. For this study two executive members of the union were assigned, Mr.Sisay Girma Vice Chairperson of the union and Mr.Tekalign Terfasa Secretary General of the union.

### **4.5.1 Challenges of the trade union**

#### **A) Challenges rose from the management of Ethiopian airlines**

According to the executives of the trade union Ethiopian airlines is relatively free from intervention of the management of the airline. IN most trade unions in Africa, employers look down upon trade unions and preconceive them as chaotic and irresponsible organizations whose major aim is to disrupt peace, order and good governance. This perception attracts government and employers interest in affairs and activities of trade unions. Political interference and intimidation has been a feature of the trade unions especially African Industrial Relations System, the activities of trade unions have occasionally attracted the attention of the political establishment, at times there has been no clear difference between trade unions leadership and the political leadership which affects unions independence highly. Unlike this situation in Ethiopian airlines trade union the interference and bad perception towards its existence is low or minor.

#### **B) Challenges related to operation of the airline and nature of the industry**

Due to the nature of the airline business the airline operates 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. There are no off working days and hours for most of its operational departments. In contrary to this the union office is active during usual working days and hours which the union is afraid the

members might be discourage to bring their issues through email, to attend quarterly , semi-annual and annual meetings of the union. According to the executives of the union even if the union posted different notices to its members to bring their issues through email it's not satisfactory. As the solution of this situation the management of the union is looking for other options like opening its office in shift basis other than office hours.

### **C ) Financial challenges of the union**

For the question raised by the researcher concerning the challenge if any the union is facing with regard to finance, the executives of the union said they are so grateful about their faithful members. Almost all of the members contribute for the union according to their salary scale without fail. And the union has strong financial system to control its revenue and cost in order to prevent the union from loss. For the fourth question raised by the researcher the managements of the union reply even if there are gaps here and there we could not say that the union is cronicley suffering from its challenges. Finally the interview was adjourned by thanking the executive members of the union.

**D)** Regarding other challenges of the union the trade union, the management of the trade union said it's becoming difficult to lead the union by current number of stewards. As the number of union members and employees in the enterprise are increasing from time to time, the cases that the union handles also rises but the recruitment of new stewards is lagging behind. So we are challenged by man power shortage said the vice president of the union. Due to the work load we have currently it might took us some time to address this issue said the interviewed trade union executives. Finally the interview was adjourned by thanking the executive members of the union for their support and cooperation on this study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

#### **5.1 Conclusions**

According to this study basic roles of trade union such as increasing cooperation and well-being among employees, negotiating and securing facilities for workers and representation shall be discharged effectively and efficiently to discharge the union's basic safeguarding members rights and interests. And the trade union at Ethiopian airlines is working well in this regard as we perceived from this study. Nevertheless, after evaluating its role with regard to contemporary roles of a trade union such as communication, advanced welfare activities, education and research, the trade union has to go a long way. The union should also involve intensely in such activities. As we could understand trade union has different challenges in general, operational challenge, management challenge and financial challenges are the major ones which obstacle the union from performing better in safeguarding its member's interest and rights. With these aspect Ethiopian airlines basic trade union has challenges but couldn't be consider as a risk to continue its duties. Man power shortage is becoming its major challenge to the union with its increasing member's number and demands.

#### **5.2 Recommendations**

On the basis of the major findings and conclusions of the study obtained above, the researcher has forwarded the following recommendations:-

- The union has to increase its communication role between different stake holders in the country through reviewing different mechanism. In this technological era the union shall equip itself with information technology, shall look a way to address its members through website, newsletters, E-newspapers in order to discharge its communication role between above stated stake holders.
  
- The union should maximize its involvement in order to provide better welfare provisions other than minor loan services. To enable the union to perform so the union could see possible investment options to generate more income. By increasing contribution amount for

the union, requesting financial support from the airline and investing on different profitable sectors would possibly help the union to generate more income.

- With regard to education, either giving the trainings by its self or arranging the sessions in collaboration with education institutions would be a possibility according to the researcher. The union could also see a way to get discount for its members after contacting the institutes in order to provide them the education with relatively low payment. Also the union could also see a means to get corporate discounts through the airline itself as it has same with different hotels, airlines and resorts.
- Most importantly the union should backup itself with up-to-date information/data about unions, the airlines business and others by conducting researchers on the area. It could be by hiring known researchers to study the area. As researches fills gaps and find probable solutions for the problems it would definitely help the union in performing its contemporary roles to safeguard its member's interest.
- The union should prepare an information system to give sufficient information to the member, organization has an intranet which is too simple to address any information through email any updated information.
- The union should conduct scheduled meetings and conference to increase the interest of members in participating in the activities of the Labor Union, give chance to all members for their new idea.
- The management as well as the union should include the development plan of the employees and should work together on how to raise the living standard of the employees.
- The union should set briefing sessions to make aware of the existence, its activity and importance for the new staff.

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APPENDIX-1

*St. Mary's University, School of Graduate Studies*

*MBA in concentration of HRM*

*Survey Questionnaire*

**Dear Respondent,**

You are kindly requested to participate on a research study for partial fulfillment of Master Degree in Business Administration. This study is intended to assess the role of trade union in Safeguarding member's interest; in case of Ethiopian airlines. This questionnaire is prepared to gather opinion of members regarding the union and your genuine response is of high importance for the research success.

Kindly respond to all the below listed questions after proper reading of the instruction provided. *Please bear in mind that all your answers are going to be used only for this study purpose and will be kept strictly confidential.*

***PART I Respondent's Demographic Data***

***Instruction:*** please put a tick mark (x) in the check box corresponding to the choice that most represents you

**1. Gender**

Male  Female

**2. Age group**

18-25  26-35  36-45  46-55  Above 55

**3. Educational Level**

Diploma  Bachelor Degree  Master's Degree  Other

**4. Division**

Ethiopian Cargo  Ethiopian Catering  Aviation Academy   
MRO  Ground services

**5. Work Experience in the company**

1-5years  6-10years  11-15years  above 15years

## ***PART II Basic roles of Trade Union***

**Measurement Scale 5= Strongly Agree 4=Agree 3=Neutral 2=Disagree 1=Strongly Disagree**  
**Please circle the choice of your Number**

### **Increasing cooperation and well-being among employees**

1. The trade union in Ethiopian Airlines is playing significant importance in increasing cooperation and well-being among employees.

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

2. The union has a significant role in creating platform to establish unifying bond among members.

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

### **Negotiating and securing facilities for workers**

3. The union works with the management for the timely provision of necessary facilities and equipment's.

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

4. The trade union is effectively participating in collective bargaining process.

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

### **Representation**

5. The trade union plays an important role in bringing difficulties and grievances of members to managements notice timely and effectively.

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

6. The members of management of the trade union are trusted and well known by members of the trade union.

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

### **Trade Unions works for the Progress of the Employees**

7. The trade union is working for the Progress of the Employees in order to improve the economic conditions.

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

### **Safeguarding the Interests of the Workers**

8. The union has firm standing on protection of interests of employees in terms of improving job security for employees'.

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

9. The existence of trade union positively contributes in safeguarding the rights and interests of the members

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

### ***PART III Contemporary roles of Trade Union***

#### **Communication**

10. The union is working effectively as communication channel between members and the airline, government and other stake holders via website, newsletter or other Medias.

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

#### **Advanced welfare activities**

11. The union is participating in better welfare activities (providing housing, loan service etc...).

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

#### **Education**

12. The union provides education or educational assistance for its members.

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

#### **Research**

13. The union conducts researches (such as back up their wage demands with knowledge of the industry, of productivity, and of comparative industry practices).

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Thank You!

**APPENDIX-2**

***St. Mary's University, School of Graduate Studies***

***MBA in concentration of HRM***

**Semi-structured interview for trade unions executives**

1. What are the challenges that face the trade union by the management of Ethiopian airlines?
2. What are the Challenges related to operation of the airline and nature of the industry?
3. What are the challenges related to Finance of the union?
4. Any other challenge in general?