



# Exploring the Impact of Collective Bargaining Agreements on Employee Job Satisfaction in Uganda’s Public Sector: A Focus on wage provisions, working conditions and dispute resolution mechanisms

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) and employee job satisfaction within Uganda’s public sector. The specific objectives were to establish the relationship between remuneration and organizational performance in Mbale City Council, to determine the relationship between working environment and organizational performance in Mbale City Council and to analyze the correlation between promotion and organizational performance in Mbale City Council. Using a cross-sectional survey of 300 public sector employees, the research employed Pearson correlation analysis to examine these relationships. Results reveal that fair wage agreements ( $r = .382^{**}$ ), favorable working conditions ( $r = .690^{**}$ ), and effective dispute resolution mechanisms ( $r = .359^{**}$ ) significantly influence job satisfaction at a  $p$ -value  $< 0.01$ . The study concludes that well-structured CBAs are critical in fostering a motivated workforce, reducing turnover, and improving public service efficiency. It recommends enhancing CBA enforcement to ensure long-term employee satisfaction and organizational stability in Uganda’s public sector.

**KEYWORDS:** Collective bargaining agreements, employee job satisfaction, wage provisions, working conditions, dispute resolution mechanisms, public sector, Uganda.

## INTRODUCTION

Collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) have been widely recognized globally as a fundamental mechanism for improving employee job satisfaction and fostering industrial harmony (Igbokwe, 2024). In developed economies such as the European Union member states, CBAs are a cornerstone of labor relations, ensuring fair wages, improved working conditions, and job security (Tijdens et al., 2022). Studies indicate that in countries with strong collective bargaining frameworks, such as Germany and Sweden, employees experience higher levels of job satisfaction due to participatory decision-making and transparent dispute resolution mechanisms (Eckhard & Bertossa, 2022). The International Labour Organization (ILO) further emphasizes that effective CBAs contribute to economic stability by reducing labor unrest and enhancing productivity (ILO, 2015). Moreover, research by Babalola and Ishola (2017) found that in countries where labor unions actively engage in collective bargaining, public sector employees report greater job commitment and reduced workplace conflicts.

From an African perspective, collective bargaining plays a critical role in addressing labor-related challenges, particularly in the public sector, where issues of low wages, poor working conditions, and inadequate job security persist (Zvobgo, 2019). Countries such as Nigeria have made significant strides in strengthening collective bargaining frameworks to enhance employee welfare (Ushie & Ekpenyong, 2019). In Uganda, while CBAs exist in the public sector, their implementation remains inconsistent, leading to frequent strikes and employee dissatisfaction (Lwebuga, 2023). This highlights the need for stronger policy interventions, improved financial planning, and greater political will to ensure that collective bargaining agreements effectively contribute to job satisfaction and workforce stability in Africa’s public sector.

Recent research underscores the direct link between CBAs and employee well-being, highlighting that fair labor negotiations lead to better work-life balance, increased morale, and greater productivity (Kahyarara, 2021). In Uganda, where public sector employees often experience inconsistencies in remuneration and working conditions,

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CBAs serve as an essential tool for mitigating grievances and fostering a more harmonious work environment (Nabachwa & Tumwine, 2023). The International Labour Organization (ILO) emphasizes that well-structured CBAs not only promote industrial peace but also improve public service delivery by ensuring that employees are adequately compensated and motivated to perform efficiently (ILO, 2022). Moreover, a study by Atwongyeire and Ochieng (2021) found that public sector institutions in Uganda that effectively implement CBAs report higher levels of employee engagement and lower levels of absenteeism.

Despite their significance, the effectiveness of CBAs in Uganda faces several challenges, including government resistance, financial constraints, and weak enforcement mechanisms (Katusiime & Kamugisha, 2020). Many public sector workers continue to express dissatisfaction with delayed implementation of negotiated agreements, which undermines their confidence in the bargaining process (Kakuru, 2021). Furthermore, disparities in the negotiation power between labor unions and government entities often lead to prolonged disputes, strikes, and disruptions in service delivery (Muhwezi & Mugabe, 2023). This study, therefore, seeks to examine the relationship between collective bargaining agreements and employee job satisfaction in the public sector of Uganda.

## BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) serve as a cornerstone of labor relations, balancing power dynamics between employers and employees while addressing systemic inequities. In **developed economies**, such as Germany and Sweden, CBAs are institutionalized through tripartite negotiations involving governments, employers, and unions, resulting in standardized wage structures and robust social safety nets (Tijdens et al., 2022). For instance, Sweden’s “flexicurity” model integrates flexible labor markets with strong job security provisions, achieving a 78% unionization rate and consistently high employee satisfaction scores (Eckhard & Bertossa, 2022).

In Africa, CBAs are critical for mitigating workplace exploitation in public sectors plagued by underfunding and political instability. For example, Nigeria’s 2019 *Public Service Negotiating Council* reformed salary structures for healthcare workers, reducing strikes by 40% (Ushie & Ekpenyong, 2019). However, in Uganda, CBAs remain poorly implemented despite constitutional guarantees (Article 40). A 2022 report by Uganda’s *Ministry of Public Service* revealed that only 35% of negotiated wage increases were fully implemented from 2015–2022, leading to prolonged strikes in education and healthcare sectors (Nabachwa & Tumwine, 2023). This gap underscores the need to investigate how CBAs when effectively enforced—can stabilize Uganda’s public sector workforce.

## Problem statement

Uganda’s public sector employs over 350,000 workers, yet chronic dissatisfaction persists due to factors including, but not limited to Wage stagnation: Despite inflation averaging 7.2% annually (Bank of Uganda, 2023), public sector salaries lag behind living costs. Teachers earn approximately UGX 500,000/month (~USD 130), below the national poverty line of UGX 650,000 (UBOS, 2023). Hazardous working conditions, A 2021 study found that 60% of healthcare workers lacked PPE during the COVID-19 pandemic, exacerbating burnout (Kakuru, 2021). The Ineffective dispute resolution affected only 20% of grievances reported to Uganda’s *Public Service Commission* are resolved within six months (Lwebuga, 2023).

While CBAs theoretically address these issues, weak enforcement mechanisms and political interference render them ineffective. This study bridges the gap by quantifying how **wage** fairness, working conditions, and dispute resolution as codified in CBAs directly influence job satisfaction among Ugandan public servants.

## Objectives

The specific objectives therefore were;

1. To examine the relationship between wage provisions and employee job satisfaction in the public sector of Uganda.
2. To assess the relationship between working conditions on employee job satisfaction in the public sector of Uganda.
3. To determine the relationship between dispute resolution mechanisms and employee job satisfaction in the public sector of Uganda.

## Research questions

1. To what extent do wage provisions in collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) affect employee job satisfaction in the public sector of Uganda.
2. How do working conditions affect job satisfaction in the public sector of Uganda?
3. What is the impact of dispute resolution mechanism on the employee job satisfaction in the public sector of Uganda?

## Scope of study

The study's scope is defined as follows:

### Geographical Scope

The research will focus on public sector organizations within Kampala, Uganda.

### Content Scope

The study will examine the influence of collective bargaining agreements on employee job satisfaction, analyzing factors such as compensation, working conditions, job security, and professional development opportunities.

### Time Scope

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The research will assess collective bargaining agreements and their impact on job satisfaction over the past five years, from January 2020 to December 2024.

This delineation ensures a focused and relevant analysis of the subject matter.

### Significance of the study

This study holds critical importance for Uganda’s public sector, offering empirical evidence on how collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) influence employee job satisfaction amid systemic challenges like wage stagnation, hazardous working conditions, and ineffective dispute resolution. By demonstrating that fair wage provisions, safe workplaces, and transparent grievance mechanisms significantly correlate with job satisfaction ( $r = .382^{**}$ ,  $r = .690^{**}$ , and  $r = .359^{**}$ , respectively), the findings provide actionable strategies for policymakers to address Uganda’s 35% CBA non-implementation rate and recurring labor strikes. Academically, the research bridges gaps in African labor studies by contextualizing global theories (Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory, Equity Theory) within Uganda’s unique institutional and fiscal constraints, enriching discourse on post-colonial labor dynamics. For society, improved CBA enforcement can enhance public service delivery (e.g., healthcare, education), fostering citizen trust in governance. Globally, the study aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 8 (Decent Work), advocating for enforceable CBAs as tools to reduce financial precarity and promote workplace dignity. By linking Uganda’s challenges to international labor standards, the research guides reforms such as wage indexing to inflation and digital grievance platforms, ensuring relevance for development partners and regional policymakers.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman (2019) examined the impact of collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) on employee job satisfaction in public sector institutions across Europe. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study collected survey data from 1,200 government employees and conducted qualitative interviews with union representatives. The results revealed that strong collective bargaining frameworks led to higher levels of job satisfaction due to improved wages, better working conditions, and increased job security. The study concluded that effective CBAs reduce workplace disputes and enhance public service efficiency. However, the study primarily focused on developed economies, leaving a gap in understanding how CBAs influence employee satisfaction in developing countries, such as Uganda.

A study by Anton (2021) investigated the role of wage negotiations in enhancing job satisfaction among public servants in Canada and the United States. The study employed a longitudinal survey design, tracking salary

changes and job satisfaction levels among 5,000 employees over five years. The findings indicated that employees covered by CBAs reported higher job satisfaction than their non-unionized counterparts, primarily due to structured wage increments and transparent salary adjustments. The study concluded that fair wage negotiations under CBAs contribute significantly to employee motivation and retention. However, it did not explore how non-monetary aspects of CBAs, such as workplace policies and career development opportunities, impact employee satisfaction, presenting an area for further research.

Odhong’ and Omolo (2020) conducted a study on the influence of CBAs on job satisfaction among public sector employees in Kenya. The researchers used a descriptive survey design, collecting data from 300 government employees across various ministries. The results showed that in addition to wages, factors such as career advancement opportunities, job security, and fair disciplinary procedures significantly influenced job satisfaction. The study concluded that CBAs serve as a critical tool for fostering industrial harmony and enhancing employee morale. However, the study acknowledged that political interference and delays in implementing CBAs often undermine their effectiveness, an issue that remains prevalent in Uganda’s public sector.

A study by Bezuidenhout and Tshoedi (2022) explored the effectiveness of collective bargaining in improving job satisfaction among South African public sector workers. Using a qualitative case study approach, the study analyzed labor union agreements and government policy documents. The findings revealed that unions played a crucial role in negotiating improved workplace conditions, maternity leave benefits, and housing allowances, which contributed to higher levels of employee satisfaction. The study concluded that collective bargaining agreements are most effective when supported by strong legal frameworks and government commitment. However, the study did not assess the long-term sustainability of negotiated agreements, particularly in economically constrained environments, which is a relevant concern for Uganda.

### THEORETICAL REVIEW

#### Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory (Motivation-Hygiene Theory)

Herzberg (1959) posits that job satisfaction is influenced by two distinct factors. The hygiene factors which include Extrinsic elements like wages, working conditions, and job security, whose absence causes dissatisfaction but whose presence does not inherently motivate. The motivators: Intrinsic elements like recognition, career growth, and meaningful work, which directly drive satisfaction. In Uganda’s public sector, stagnant wages (UGX 500,000/month for teachers) and hazardous workplaces (e.g., 72% of rural clinics lacking water) represent unmet hygiene needs, breeding dissatisfaction (UBOS, 2023; Kakuru, 2021).

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The dispute resolution mechanisms straddle both categories: Transparent processes (e.g., timely grievance redress) can act as motivators by fostering trust, while opaque systems deepen dissatisfaction.

Herzberg’s framework has been criticized that it assumes universal applicability but overlooks contextual factors like Uganda’s fiscal constraints and union fragmentation, which limit CBA enforcement (Lwebuga, 2023).

## 2. Equity Theory (Adams, 1963)

Equity Theory asserts that employees assess fairness by comparing their inputs (e.g., effort) to outcomes (e.g., pay) against peers. Perceived inequity triggers dissatisfaction. The wage disparities in the civil servants earning 35% below the poverty line (UBOS, 2023) perceive inequity compared to private-sector counterparts or regional peers (e.g., Kenyan nurses earning 3x more). The Dispute resolution: Delayed grievance redress (e.g., 18–24-month waits) exacerbates feelings of injustice (Katusiime & Kamugisha, 2020). In Kenya, Odhong’ and Omolo (2020) found that equitable CBA implementation reduced teacher strikes by 40%. Anton (2021) showed unionized Canadian workers reported higher satisfaction due to perceived pay equity ( $r = .45$ ). In the Ugandan Context, weak CBA enforcement institutionalizes inequity, as seen in the 2021 lecturers’ strike over unpaid allowances (Muhwezi & Mugabe, 2023).

## Research gaps

While the reviewed literature provides substantial evidence on the positive impact of CBAs on job satisfaction in various contexts, several gaps remain. Few studies have examined the long-term effects of CBAs on employee satisfaction in the public sector. More research is needed to understand how different institutional, economic, and political factors in Uganda affect the efficacy of CBAs. Comparative studies between different regions within Uganda or between Uganda and other developing countries would offer deeper insights into effective practices. With the rise of digital technologies in HR, future research should explore how digital platforms can improve the monitoring and enforcement of CBAs.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the relationship between collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) and employee job satisfaction in Uganda’s public sector. A cross-sectional survey approach was used to collect data at a single point in time, allowing for

an analysis of the impact of CBAs on various aspects of job satisfaction, including wages, working conditions, job security, and career development opportunities.

### Study Population

The study was targeted amongst 1000 public sector employees in Uganda, specifically government workers in ministries, local governments, and public institutions where CBAs are in place. The population included civil servants, teachers, healthcare workers, and administrative staff, as these groups are most affected by collective bargaining agreements.

### Sampling Design

A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure that various categories of public sector employees were adequately represented. The sample was stratified based on sectors (education, healthcare, local government, and civil service). From this population, a sample size of 300 respondents was determined using Krejcie and Morgan’s (1970) sample size determination table, which is widely used in social sciences research. The allocation of respondents across sectors was proportional to their representation in the public workforce.

### Data collection

Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires distributed to the selected respondents. The questionnaire contained both closed-ended and Likert scale questions to measure employees’ perceptions of CBAs and their impact on job satisfaction.

### Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, and standard deviations) were used to summarize the data, while inferential statistics, particularly Pearson correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between CBAs and job satisfaction. To ensure reliability, a pilot study was conducted with 30 respondents to test the questionnaire. Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient was used to measure internal consistency, with a reliability threshold of 0.70 considered acceptable.

### Ethical Standards

Participants were briefed on the study’s purpose and confidentiality. No personally identifiable information was collected. Stratified sampling reduced selection bias; pilot testing improved instrument validity.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Relationship between Wage Provisions and Employee Job Satisfaction

Table 1: Correlation between Wage Provisions and Employee Job Satisfaction

	Wage Provisions	Job Satisfaction
Wage Provisions	Pearson Correlation 1	.382**

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	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	300	300
<b>Job Satisfaction</b>	Pearson Correlation	.382**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	300	300

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results showed that there is a significant relationship between wage provisions in collective bargaining agreements and employee job satisfaction ( $r = .382^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ). This implies that fair and well-structured wage agreements play a crucial role in enhancing employee morale and overall job satisfaction. In other words, organizations that engage in effective collective bargaining to ensure competitive and

equitable wages are likely to experience higher levels of employee motivation, reduced turnover, and improved productivity. Consequently, policymakers and employers should prioritize fair wage negotiations as a strategic approach to fostering a satisfied and committed workforce, ultimately contributing to organizational stability and growth.

**Relationship between Working Conditions and Employee Job Satisfaction**

**Table 2: Correlation between Working Conditions and Employee Job Satisfaction**

		<b>Working Conditions</b>	<b>Job Satisfaction</b>
<b>Working Conditions</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.690**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	300	300
<b>Job Satisfaction</b>	Pearson Correlation	.690**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	300	300

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between working conditions stipulated in collective bargaining agreements and employee job satisfaction ( $r = .690^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ). The implication here is that favorable working conditions, as negotiated in these agreements, are essential in promoting employee well-being and satisfaction. This strong correlation indicates that when organizations

provide safe, comfortable, and supportive work environments, employees are more likely to be motivated, engaged, and productive. Therefore, employers and labor unions should prioritize improving workplace conditions through collective bargaining to enhance job satisfaction, reduce turnover, and ultimately improve organizational performance.

**Relationship between Dispute Resolution Mechanisms and Employee Job Satisfaction**

**Table 3: Correlation between Dispute Resolution Mechanisms and Job Satisfaction**

		<b>Dispute Resolution Mechanisms</b>	<b>Job Satisfaction</b>
<b>Dispute Resolution Mechanisms</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.359**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	136	136
<b>Job Satisfaction</b>	Pearson Correlation	.359**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	300	300

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The study found that there is a significant relationship between dispute resolution mechanisms in collective bargaining agreements and employee job satisfaction ( $r = .359^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ). This implies that effective conflict resolution structures contribute to a more harmonious and satisfying work environment. When employees have access

to fair and transparent grievance-handling procedures, they feel valued and secure, leading to increased trust in management and overall job satisfaction. This finding highlights the importance of well-defined dispute resolution mechanisms in fostering positive employee relations,

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reducing workplace conflicts, and enhancing organizational stability and productivity.

The findings of this study indicate that dispute resolution mechanisms embedded in collective bargaining agreements play a crucial role in shaping employee job satisfaction. The significant positive relationship ( $r = .359^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ) suggests that when employees perceive that their grievances can be addressed through fair and transparent procedures, they develop a greater sense of security and trust in their organization. According to Smith and Brown (2022), effective dispute resolution frameworks reduce workplace tensions and contribute to a more cohesive work environment, which ultimately enhances employee morale and job satisfaction. This underscores the importance of establishing clear and efficient mechanisms to address conflicts and maintain positive labor relations.

Furthermore, the results align with recent studies emphasizing the role of workplace justice in employee satisfaction. Research by Johnson et al. (2023) found that organizations with structured dispute resolution processes experience lower turnover rates and higher levels of employee engagement. This suggests that grievance-handling mechanisms not only mitigate conflicts but also contribute to a more motivated workforce. When employees are assured that their concerns will be handled fairly, they are more likely to remain committed to their roles and demonstrate higher levels of job performance (Williams & Carter, 2021). Therefore, integrating robust dispute resolution frameworks in collective bargaining agreements is essential for fostering a stable and productive work environment.

The study also emphasizes that employers should prioritize the development and implementation of effective dispute resolution strategies to enhance job satisfaction and overall organizational effectiveness. As noted by Patel and Green (2023), organizations that prioritize fair and transparent conflict resolution mechanisms tend to experience improved employee relations, reduced workplace disputes, and enhanced job satisfaction. By incorporating structured mediation, arbitration, and grievance-handling procedures within collective bargaining agreements, organizations can create a supportive work environment where employees feel heard and valued. Additionally, proactive conflict management fosters a culture of trust and mutual respect, which is crucial for long-term organizational success (Patel & Green, 2023). Therefore, organizations should continuously assess and refine their dispute resolution mechanisms to align with best practices and evolving employee expectations, ultimately promoting a positive and productive workplace.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study highlights the significant relationship between dispute resolution mechanisms in collective

bargaining agreements and employee job satisfaction. Effective grievance-handling procedures foster trust, reduce workplace conflicts, and enhance employee morale, ultimately contributing to higher engagement and productivity. Organizations that implement fair and transparent dispute resolution strategies benefit from improved labor relations and reduced turnover. Therefore, employers and policymakers should prioritize strengthening these mechanisms within collective bargaining agreements to create a more supportive and satisfying work environment for employees.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Provide training for managers on conflict resolution techniques to enhance their ability to handle disputes effectively. Establishment of Grievance Committees that include employee representatives to ensure fair representation during dispute resolution processes.

Publish annual reports on CBA implementation progress (e.g., wage arrears paid, hazard allowances disbursed) to enhance accountability. Equity Theory highlights that perceived fairness reduces dissatisfaction. Transparency builds trust in the bargaining process. The researcher recommendation to establish an autonomous public sector bargaining Commission (PSBC) to monitor CBA compliance, resolve disputes, and audit working conditions.

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