

Towards Improved Industrial Relations of Employees in Ethiopian Agricultural Research Institute: The Case of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center, Ambo, Ethiopia

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Industrial relations cover all such relationships that a business enterprise maintains with various sections of the society such as workers, state customers, and public who come into its contact. In other words, it is the study of the interactions among industry, its employees and the governments that oversee them. The general objective of the study is to assess the industrial relations of employees of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center (APPRC) and propose strategic measures for its improvement. The study employed comprehensive data collection methods whereby both secondary and primary methods of data collection methods were employed to address the objectives of the study. Data collected through structured questionnaire were analyzed with the help of simple descriptive statistics like frequencies and percentages and inferential statistics with the help of SPSS software (version 20). Promoting good governance and democracy, creating favorable working environment for employees and environment of good will and mutual cooperation, responding to employees' reported problems promptly and positively; provision of trainings to employees on strategic issues and solutions; and encouraging employees to use modern technologies like ICTs in service delivery are some of the strategic measures proposed to improve the industrial relations of employees of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center.

Key Words: Ambo, employees, industrial relations, plant protection, research


Introduction

Industrial relations cover all such relationships that a business enterprise maintains with various sections of the society such as workers, state customers, and public who come into its contact. In other words, it is the study of the interactions among industry, its employees and the governments that oversee them. Moreover, it is the study of the various institutions and organizations that are formed as a result of these interactions, such as labour unions and business unions. Some scholars also define Industrial relations as a field of study that concentrates on employment relationships between management and workers. As part of the social sciences, industrial relations attempts to understand relationships through industry employment and its institutions. In a nutshell, industrial relations may be defined as "the employer-employee relationships covered specifically under collective bargaining and industrial relation laws. It also encompasses other organizations such as governments, institutions, and organizations that directly or indirectly regulate the industrial relations system (Snape&Redman, 2012). In this study, industrial rela-

tions refer to the relationship between Ambo Plant Protection Research Center as employer and its employees (researchers and workers of administrative wing).

The approaches underpinning this study were combination of psychological, sociological, and human relations approaches. The study adopted the psychological approach as it assessed the perception of employees regarding problems of industrial relations like workplace disputes, low organizational profits from its activities, limited good will of employees and mutual cooperation among employees, and limited promotion of democracy in all management levels of the organization.

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Employees' perception on the reaction of the management to the aforementioned problems also demanded the adoption of psychological approach. This study also adopted sociological approach as it dealt with the interaction among social actors in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center. A human relation approach was also adopted since the interpersonal relationships among persons in the organization was also concerned.

Ambo plant protection research center (APPRC) was established in 1977. The major objectives of the center are: to carry out basic research on plant diseases, insect pests, weed and biosystematics; to coordinate national plant pathology, entomology, weed science, and biosystematics researches; and to give identification services of plant pests (APPRC, 2014).

The major outputs of the center are: different insect pests, diseases, weed species and the natural enemies are collected, identified, and fairly documented; the crop losses incurred by some key pests are assessed and the economic threshold levels are determined; the biology, ecology, epidemiology, distribution, and population dynamics of key pest species are studied; different research methods and techniques for field and laboratory experiments are developed; and different pest management methods including cultural, chemicals, physical biological and host plant resistance are studied (APPRC, 2014). The Other services provided by the center include: collection of scientific and technological information, and documentation; museums and collection of science and/or technology; counseling and extension work; and S & T education and training (APPRC, 2014).

The current human resource profile of the center indicates a total of 32 scientists (26 males and 6 females); a total of 38 technicians (27 males and 11 females); and a total of 68 auxiliary personnel (46 males and 22 females). In short, the current total number of employees of the organization is 138 (99 males and 39 females) (APPRC, 2014).

Ambo plant protection research center (APPRC) has been contributing much for improving livelihood and food security of citizens through production of agricultural technologies (crop production and protection technologies) in Ethiopia. While its great contribution is commendable, little attention was given to its industrial relations by researchers in the field of industrial relations. In other words, problems of industrial relations of employees of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center were not explored, management responses to these problems were not studied, and industrial relations strategy in the organization was not developed. Hence, the contribution of this study for filling the aforementioned research and information gaps is a reality. To this end, this study as-

essed industrial relations of employees of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center and proposed strategic measures for its improvement.

The general objective of the study was to assess the status of industrial relations of employees of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center (APPRC) and propose strategic measures for its improvement. The specific objectives were: To analyze the employees' perceptions on problems of industrial relations of employees of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center; To analyze employees' perceptions on the reaction of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center's management to minimize workplace disputes, increase organizational profits from research activities, create an environment of goodwill and mutual cooperation, and promote democracy throughout all management levels of the organization; and To propose possible solutions to solve issues of industrial relations of employees in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center. The study answered the following research questions: What are the critical issues of industrial relations of employees of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center (APPRC)? How do employees of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center (APPRC) perceive about issues of industrial relations in their organization? How do employees of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center (APPRC) perceive about the reaction of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center's management to minimize workplace disputes, increase profits, create an environment of goodwill and mutual cooperation? And What are the possible solutions to solve issues of industrial relations of employees of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center?

The findings of the study will serve as baseline information for researchers who are interested to conduct further research on issues of industrial relations in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center (APPRC) and other sister organizations in Ethiopian Agricultural Research Institute. Furthermore, the strategic recommendations forwarded in this study will enable employees of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center and its management or employer to properly understand issues of industrial relations of employees and jointly search for sustainable solutions of the issues identified. In a nutshell, Ambo Plant Protection Research Center (APPRC) may minimize workplace disputes, increase its organizational profits from research activities, create an environment of goodwill of employees and mutual cooperation among employees, and promote good governance and democracy in all its management levels as a result of proper implementation of strategic measures proposed in this study.

Research Methodology

This section deals with research methodology (types and sources of data, sampling methods and procedures, methods of data collection, data measurement and methods of data analysis).

Data Types and Sources

With regard to data types, both secondary and primary data types were used. The secondary sources for the secondary data were reports of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center, report of Ethiopian Agricultural Research Institute, national and regional industrial relations policies and strategies, and robust published materials (books, journal articles, reports of national and international organizations, and internet sources) on industrial relations. The primary sources for the primary data were employees and management of Ambo Plant Protection Research Centre.

Sampling Methods and Procedures

The study employed a combination of purposive and stratified simple random sampling techniques. First, purposive sampling technique was employed to select Ambo Plant Protection Research Center from the existing research centers of Ethiopian Agricultural Research Institute with the purpose of assessing industrial relations of employees of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center (APPRC) and proposing strategic measures for their improvement. Respondents for questionnaire administration were selected with the help of simple random sampling technique where male and female employees were included. The study generated the necessary primary data from 70 employees of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center (> 50%) of the total population (138 employees).

Data Collection

The study employed comprehensive data collection methods whereby both secondary and primary methods of data collection methods were employed to address the aforementioned objectives of the study. The first methodological step was a comprehensive analysis of the existing literature in order to obtain both theoretical insights and secondary information. The review themes include: concepts of industrial relations, issues of industrial relations of employees in service organizations, and management responses to issues of industrial relations of employees in service organizations. The second methodological step was collection of primary data from primary sources. Accordingly, primary data were collected with the

help of structured questionnaire. Structured questionnaire (SQ) was designed, pre-tested and distributed to 70 employees' of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center to analyze the employees perceptions on problems of industrial relations of employees of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center, and to analyze employees' perceptions on the reaction of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center's management to minimize workplace disputes, increase organizational profits from research activities, create an environment of goodwill and mutual cooperation, and promote democracy throughout all levels of the organization. Questionnaire in English, Amaharic and "Afaan Oromoo" languages were distributed to them based on their level of understanding and language preferences.

Semi-structured interview (SSI) was also employed to collect primary qualitative data from two top management levels in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center (APPRC) on the existing management strategies for industrial relations of employees in APPRC. Accordingly, in-depth interview was made with center manager of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center (APPRC) and director of human resource directorate of APPRC. The two top management levels of APPRC are the ones which properly understand the reaction of the current management to issues of industrial relations of employees of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center. The checklist for semi-structured interview included: 1). What are the existing management strategies to minimize workplace disputes in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center? 2). what are the existing management strategies to increase organizational profits from research activities of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center? 3).What are the existing management strategies to create environment of goodwill and mutual cooperation in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center? 4). What are the existing management strategies to promote democracy throughout all levels of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center? and 5). Does Ambo Plant Protection Research Center have any plan to improve the industrial relations of employees?

Data Measurements and Analysis

The study measured data through two measurements. Accordingly, nominal, and ordinal measures were employed to measure the perceptions of employees regarding industrial relations of employees in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center. Accordingly, nominal measure (yes or no questions) was employed to understand the position of respondents on the issues under investigation. Moreover, five level likert scales (ordinal measure) were employed to measure the perception of respondents on the issues under investiga-

tion. With regard to data analysis, both qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis were employed. The qualitative data captured through key informant interview were transcribed, interpreted, and analyzed in the form of descriptions and narrations. Data collected through structured questionnaire were analyzed with the help of simple descriptive statistics like frequencies and percentages and inferential statistics with the help of SPSS software (version 20).

Results

Socio-Economic Profile of Respondents

This section describes the age composition, sex, marital status, education level, and religious composition of respondents.

Age Composition of Respondents: 51% (n=36) respondents were within the age range of 31-50 years of age while about 39% (n=27) and 10% (n=7) were within the age range of 18-30 and greater than 51 respectively. This indicates that more than half of the respondents were within the age of 31-50 years of age at the time of interview.

Sex of Respondents: 50% (n=35) of respondents were males while 50% (n=35) of them were females. This indicates that equal proportion of male and female respondents were involved in the interview.

Marital Status of Respondents: 73% (n=51) of respondents from the employees of Ambo plant protection

research center were married while 27% (n=19) of them were unmarried at the time of interview. This indicates that the majority of respondents were married.

Education Level of Respondents: 73% (n=51) of respondents were with university education or above level while 27% (n=10) of them were with secondary education level. This indicates that the majority of respondents were with university education level at the time of interview.

Religious Composition of Respondents: 74% (n=52) of respondents were from Orthodox Christianity while 23% (n=16) and 3% (n=2) of them were from protestant Christianity and Muslim respectively. This indicates that the majority of respondents were from the Orthodox Christianity at the time of interview.

Employees' Perceptions on Problems of Industrial Relations of Employees of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center

Respondents from Ambo Plant Protection Research Center were asked to identify problems of industrial relations in their organization. 39% and 37% of the respondents voted for limited good will of employees and mutual cooperation among employees; and limited promotion of democracy in all levels of management respectively as the major problem of industrial relations. This was followed by 21% and 3% of respondents who voted for low organizational profits from research activities and work place disputes respectively (See figure 1).

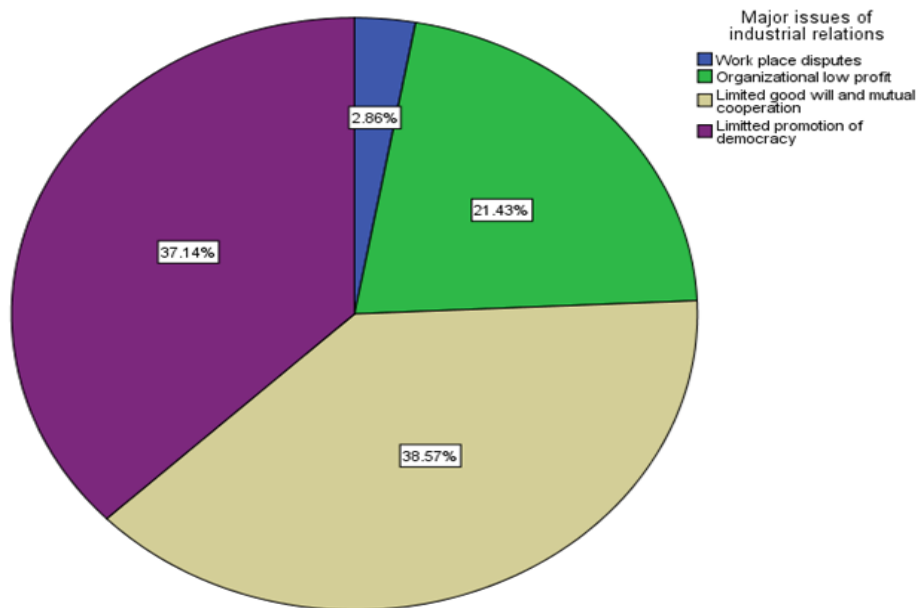


Figure 1: Issues of industrial relations in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center

Respondents were further asked to rate the extent of issues of industrial relations in their organization. The analysis of extent of each issue is presented hereunder.

1. Extent of Work Place Disputes:

Respondents were asked to rate extent of workplace disputes in their organization. 51% of the respondents

voted for moderate extent of workplace disputes. 20%, 17%, 7% and 4% of respondents voted for low, very low, high, and very high extents of workplace disputes respectively (see table 1). This implies that more than half of the respondents perceive that the extent of workplace disputes in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center is moderate.

Table 1. Extent of Workplace Disputes in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center

Extent	Count	Percentage
Very high	3	4.3
High	5	7.1
Moderate	36	51.4
Low	14	20
Very low	12	17.1
Total	70	100

Source: Survey, 2014

2. Extent of Organizational Profits from Research

Activities: Respondents were asked to rate extent of organizational profits from research activities. 66% of the respondents voted for moderate extent of organizational profits from research activities. 25%

and 9% of respondents voted for low, and very low extents of organizational profits from research activities respectively (see table 2). This implies that majority of the respondents perceive that the extent of organizational profits from research activities in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center is moderate.

Table 2. Extent of Organizational Profits from Research Activities

Extent	Count	Percentage
Moderate	46	66
Low	18	25
Very low	6	9
Total	70	100

Source: Survey, 2014

3. Extent of Good Will of employees and Mutual Cooperation among employees:

Respondents were asked to rate the extent of good will of employees and mutual cooperation among employees in their organization. 50% of the respondents voted for moderate extent of good will and mutual cooperation

in their organization. 34% and 16% of respondents voted for low, and very low extents of good will and mutual cooperation in their organization respectively (see table 3). This implies that half of the respondents perceive that the extent of good will and mutual cooperation in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center is moderate.

Table 3. Extent of Good Will of Employees of and Mutual Cooperation Among Employees

Extent	Count	Percentage
Moderate	35	50
Low	24	34
Very low	11	16
Total	70	100

Source: Survey, 2014

4. Extent of Promotion of Democracy Through All Management Levels: Respondents were asked to rate extent of promotion of democracy through all management levels in their organization. 50% of the respondents voted for moderate extent of promotion of democracy through all management levels. 37%,

11%, and 2% of respondents voted for low, very low, and high extents of workplace dispute respectively (see table 4). This implies that half of the respondents perceive that the extent of promotion of democracy through all management levels in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center is moderate.

Table 4. Extent of Promotion of Democracy Through All Management Levels

Extent	Count	Percentage
High	1	1.4
Moderate	35	50
Low	26	37.1
Very low	8	11.4
Total	70	100

Source: Survey, 2014

Employees’ Perceptions on the Reaction of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center’s Management to Problems of Industrial Relations of Employees

Respondents were asked to confirm whether the current management of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center reacts to issues of industrial relations or not. The analysis of the respondents’ perceptions on current management’s reaction to each issue of industrial relations are presented hereunder.

1. Current Management’s Reaction to Workplace Disputes:

Respondents were asked to confirm whether the current management of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center reacts to workplace disputes or not. 97% of the respondents responded to yes answer while only 3% responded to no answer. 50% of respondents who responded to yes answer were females while 47% of them were males.

2. Current Management’s Reaction to Increase Organizational Profits from Research Activities:

Respondents were asked to confirm whether the current management of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center reacts to increase organizational profits from research activities or not. 97% of the respondents responded to yes answer while only 3% of them responded to no answer. 50% of respondents who responded to yes answer were females while 47% of them were males.

3. Current Management’s Reaction to Create Environment of Good Will and Mutual Cooperation:

Respondents were asked to confirm whether the current management of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center reacts to create environment of good will and mutual cooperation

or not. 96% of the respondents responded to yes answer while only 4% of them responded to no answer. 50% of respondents who responded to yes answer were females while 46% of them were males.

4. Current Management’s Reaction to Promote Democracy Through All Management Levels:

Respondents were asked to confirm whether the current management of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center reacts to promote democracy through all management levels or not. 96% of the respondents responded to yes answer while only 4% of them responded to no answer. 50% of respondents who responded to yes answer were females while 46% of them were males.

Respondents were further asked to rate the extent of the reaction of the current management to issues of industrial relations and the analysis of extent of each issue is presented hereunder.

1. Extent of Current Management’s Reaction to Minimize Workplace Disputes:

Respondents were asked to rate extent of current management’s reaction to minimize workplace disputes in their organization. 50% of the respondents voted for moderate extent of current management’s reaction to minimize workplace disputes in their organization. 31%,11%, and 7% of respondents voted for high, very high, and low extents respectively of current management’s reaction to minimize workplace dispute in their organization (see table 5). This implies that half of the respondents perceive that the extent of current management’s reaction to minimize workplace disputes in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center is moderate.

Table 5. Extent of Current Management's Reaction to Minimize Workplace Dispute

Extent	Count	Percentage
Very High	8	11.4
High	22	31.4
Moderate	35	50.0
Low	5	7.1
Total	70	100

Source: Survey, 2014

2. Extent of Current Management's Reaction to Increase Organizational Profits from Research Activities: Respondents were asked to rate the current management's reaction to increase organizational profits from research activities. 53% of the respondents voted for moderate extent of current management's reaction to increase organizational profits from research activities in their organization. 37%, 7%, 1%, and 1% of respondents voted for high,

very high, low, and very low extents respectively of current management's reaction to increase organizational profits from research activities in their organization (see table 6). This implies that more than half of the respondents perceive that the extent of current management's reaction to increase organizational profits from research activities in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center is moderate.

Table 6. Extent of Current Management's Reaction to Increase Organizational Benefits from Research Activities

Extent	Count	Percentage
Very High	5	7.1
High	26	37.1
Moderate	37	52.9
Low	1	1.4
Very low	1	1.4
Total	70	100

Source: Survey, 2014

3. Extent of Current Management's Reaction to Create Environment of Good Will and Mutual Cooperation: Respondents were asked to rate extent of current management's reaction to create environment of good will and mutual cooperation. 51% of the respondents voted for moderate extent of current management's reaction to create environment of good will and mutual cooperation in their organization. 31%, 9%, and 9% of respondents voted

for high, very high, and low extent respectively of current management's reaction to create environment of good will and mutual cooperation in their organization (see table 7). This implies that more than half of the respondents perceive that the extent of current management's reaction to create environment of good Will of employees and mutual cooperation among employees in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center is moderate.

Table 7. Extent of Current Management's Reaction to Create Environment of Good Will and Mutual Cooperation

Extent	Count	Percentage
Very High	6	8.6
High	22	31.4
Moderate	36	51.4
Low	6	8.6
Total	70	100

Source: Survey, 2014

4. Extent of Current Management's Reaction to Promote Good Governance and Democracy through All Management Levels of the organization: Respondents were asked to rate extent of current management's reaction to promote democracy through all management levels of the organization. 53% of the respondents voted for moderate extent of current management's reaction to promote democracy through all management levels

of the organization. 20%, 16%, and 11% of respondents voted for high, low, and very high extent respectively of current management's reaction to promote democracy through all management levels of the organization (see table 8). This implies that more than half of the respondents perceive that the extent of current management's reaction to create environment of good Will and mutual cooperation in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center is moderate.

Table 8. Extent of Current Management's Reaction to Promote Democracy through All Management Levels of the organization

Extent	Count	Percentage
Very High	8	11.4
High	14	20
Moderate	37	52.9
Low	11	15.7
Total	70	100

Source: Survey, 2014

Employees' Suggestions to Solve Issues of Industrial Relations in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center

One of the specific objectives of the study was to propose possible solutions to solve issues of industrial relations of employees in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center. Respondent proposed strategic solutions to address the identified issues of industrial relations in their organization. The proposed strategic solutions for each issue of industrial relations and overall industrial relations are presented hereunder.

1. Proposed Strategic Solutions to minimize workplace disputes in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center (APPRC): Promotion of good governance and effective service delivery; Periodical discussion between management and employees of APPRC; Creation of conducive working environment for employees; Provision of incentives for hardworking employees to motivate them; Motivating employees for hard work and creation of peaceful working environment; Promotion of cultural relativism and tolerance at work place; Awareness creation and training to employees on work place rules and regulations; and Promotion of immediate negotiation and conflict resolution at work place were proposed.

2. Proposed Strategic Solutions to Increase Organizational Profits from Research Activities: Strengthening collaboration and partnership with international, national, and local organizations; Undertaking research on pressing issues of rural local farmers and scaling-up of successful research results; Strengthening collaboration and joint work among employees and between management and employees

at all levels of the organization; Developing sense of ownership of research activities by employees; Working with principle of cultural relativism and tolerance; Promoting good governance with its key principles (transparency and participation of employees in organizational decision making); Supporting research activities with modern technologies; Provision of incentives for new innovations; and Promotion of hard work and team work culture in undertaking research activities were proposed.

3. Proposed Strategic Solutions to Create Environment of Good Will and Mutual Cooperation: Working with principle of ethical service; Developing mutual relationship and periodical discussion among employees; Periodical social interaction between the management and employees; Adopting bottom-up planning and introducing attractive workplace pay for employees; Promotion of team work and team spirit in all management levels of the organization; Promotion of good governance in all levels of management; Improvement of salary scale and increment of salary for employees; and Provision of incentives for hardworking employees were proposed.

4. Proposed Strategic Solutions to Promote Good Governance and Democracy in All Management Levels of the organization: Working with principles of cultural relativism, equity, and fairness; Promotion of freedom of speech for employees; Adopting bottom-up planning to mainstream ideas of employees into organizational planning; Awareness creation for employees at all management level with regard to good governance and democratic leadership; and Promotion of good governance and

treating employees with fairness and equity were proposed.

5. *Employee Suggestions to Improve Industrial Relations of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center (APPRC)*: Developing strong work ethics by all employees; Participatory management by managers and leaders of APPRC; Increasing participation in international meetings; Strengthening more collaboration and partnerships with other organizations at all levels; Undertaking research on demand driven development issues of local communities and industries; Motivating employees for hard work and promotion of cultural relativism; Promoting good governance and democracy in all levels of the organization; Experience sharing among employees; Periodical discussion on issues of industrial relations between the management and employees; Promoting new innovations and providing incentives for new innovations development; Creating favourable working environment for employees; Responding to employees' reported problems promptly and positively; Provision of technical on the job trainings to employees; and Encouraging employees to use modern technologies like ICTs in service delivery were proposed by the participants of the focus group discussions. **The perspective of Top Management Levels of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center (APPRC) on Problems of Industrial Relations of Employees and Proposed Solutions:** The perspective of center manager and director of human resources directorate were assessed through semi-structured interview and the results are presented hereunder.

A. Perspective of Center Manager on issues of industrial relations of APPRC and proposed solutions: General discussion, group discussion, counseling, review of grievances, and disciplinary measures were reported as existing management strategies to minimize workplace disputes in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center. Creating working group/change army, provision of on job training, motivation of workers through different mechanisms, facilitating the working environment, and rewarding model employees were reported as existing management strategies to increase organizational profits from undertaking research activities of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center. Letting all workers have say in all strategic decision making processes, motivating workers through different mechanisms, rewarding workers according to their performances, and rewarding model workers to motivate other workers for better performance were reported as existing management strategies to create environment of good will and mutual cooperation in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center. Awareness creation and timely training on democracy and good governance, letting workers know and practice democracy and

good governance in their interactions, and educating and encouraging workers to practice the principles of good governance and fight corruption were reported as existing management strategies to promote democracy and good governance throughout all management levels of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center. Ambo Plant Protection Research Center was also reported to have very good plan of improving industrial relations of its employees and other organizations and industries in the future to effectively contribute for the sustainable development of Ethiopia.

B. Perspective of Human Resources Directorate Director's on issues of industrial relations of APPRC and proposed solutions: Adherence to the rules and regulations of civil service was reported as existing management strategy to minimize workplace disputes in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center. Provision of on job training, motivation of workers through different mechanisms, facilitating the working environment, and rewarding model employees were reported as existing management strategies to increase organizational profits from undertaking research activities of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center. Participating all workers in the decision making processes, and provision of short-term and long-term trainings were reported as existing management strategies to create environment of good will and mutual cooperation in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center. Providing periodical and timely training on democracy and good governance, and educating and encouraging workers to practice the principles of good governance and fight corruption were reported as existing management strategies to promote democracy and good governance throughout all management levels of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center. Ambo Plant Protection Research Center was also reported to have very good plan of improving industrial relations of its employees and other organizations and industries in the future through creation of favorable working environment for its employees and establishing effective linkage and partnerships with other organizations and industries at different levels.

Discussion

Issues of Industrial Relation of Employees of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center

The findings of the study revealed that limited good will of employees and mutual cooperation among employees, limited promotion of democracy through all levels of management, low organizational profits from research activities and work place disputes are the contemporary issues of industrial relations of

employees in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center.

More than half of the respondents(51%) perceive that the extent of workplace disputes in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center is moderate. Majority of the respondents (66%) perceive that the extent of organizational profits from research activities in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center is moderate. Half of the respondents(50%) perceive that the extent of good will of employees and mutual cooperation among employees of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center is moderate. Half of the respondents(50%) perceive that the extent of promotion of good governance and democracy in all management levels in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center is moderate.

The existence of workplace disputes at work places in Ambo Plant Protection Research center is similar with the findings of scholars of industrial relations of employees in organizations. For instance, conflicts have impacts on organizations ranging from the disruption of relationships in the workplace and negative impacts on productivity to legal disputes that may expose the organization to significant liability (Harnois & Gabriel, 2000; USDA, 2001; Kaufman, 2012; Work safe Victoria, 2012; Colvin, 2013; Safe Work Australia, 2013; Bonet, 2014). According to Coates et al. (1997), conflict is a form of competitive behaviour involving actual or perceived differences in interests or limited resources. Conflict can manifest itself in several ways in organizations: through disputes in the form of grievances, disciplinary actions, complaints, lawsuits, strikes, or threatened legal action; competition between colleagues or work units; sabotage; inefficiency or a lack of productivity; low morale and motivation; and withholding knowledge (Coates et al.,1997; Kaufman, 2012; Colvin, 2013; Bonet, 2014).

The existence of low organizational profits from research activities in Ambo Plant Protection Research center is similar with the findings of scholars of industrial relations of employees in organizations. For instance, Sparks et al. (2001) attest that organizations may suffer financially from heightened employee perceptions of job insecurity due to the associated costs of increased absenteeism and sickness resulting from lowered employee well-being. Moreover, perceived job insecurity may impact on organizations in terms of less employee organizational commitment and lowered morale and motivation (Coates et al., 1997; Sparks et al.,2001).

The existence of limited good will of employees and mutual cooperation among employees in Ambo Plant Protection Research center is similar with the findings of scholars of industrial relations of employees in organizations. Knack & Keefer (1997) affirm

that economic activities that require some agents to rely on the future actions of others are accomplished at lower cost in higher-trust environments. On the other hand, low trust can discourage innovation. For instance, if entrepreneurs must devote more time to monitoring possible malfeasance by partners, employees, and suppliers, they have less time to devote to innovation in new products or processes (Coates et al., 1997; Knack & Keefer, 1997; Woolcock, 1998).

The existence of limited promotion of good governance and democracy in all levels of management in Ambo Plant Protection Research center is similar with the findings of scholars of industrial relations of employees in organizations. Corruption is economically wasteful, politically destabilizing, and destructive of governmental capacity (Nye, 1967; Ely & Thomas, 2000; Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003; Jackson & Muellenborn, 2013). Paying attention to differences in power and status is critical for understanding diversity in organizations (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Lipsky et al., 2013). In other words, diversity increases the available pool of resources-networks, perspectives, styles, knowledge, and insights-that people can bring to bear on complex problems. For instance, traditionally underrepresented people, such as women and people of color, may have immense contributions to offer work groups. Moreover, group diversity and group outcomes have strong link which may be manifested in the potential contributions that diverse groups have to offer relative to those that are more homogeneous (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Lipsky et al., 2013).

Management's Response to Problems of Industrial Relations in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center

Majority of the respondents (97%) perceive that the current management of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center positively reacts to conflicts like workplace disputes, low organizational profits from research activities, limited good will of employees and mutual cooperation among employees, and limited promotion of good governance and democracy in all levels of management. Half of the respondents (50%) perceive that the extent of current management's reaction to minimize workplace dispute in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center is moderate. More than half (53%) of the respondents perceive that the extent of current management's reaction to increase organizational profits from research activities in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center is moderate. Half of the respondents (50%) perceive that the extent of current management's reaction to create environment of good will and mutual cooperation in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center is moderate. Half of the respondents

(50%) perceive that the extent of current management's reaction to promote good governance and democracy in all management levels in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center is moderate.

Scholars of industrial relations recommend effective conflict management system to deal with conflicts like workplace disputes in organizations. For instance, Coates et al. (1997) and Posthuma (2010) attest that effective conflict management systems can contribute to an effective high-performance workplace by improving employee involvement, morale, and productivity. These systems are expected to address a few key principles. First, it should accept that conflict will occur. Second, stakeholders must know that there is a clear system for managing conflict. Third, the system should address the interests of all stakeholders and should be fair and be seen to be fair. Finally, it should be easily accessible and safe to use (Coates et al., 1997; Colvin, 2013). Colvin (2013) also asserts that organizations must have strong incentives to develop procedures to manage conflict and help resolve disputes that arise in the workplace. Conflict management systems and employee voice mechanisms have been shown to improve employee involvement, commitment, and trust, as well as morale and productivity (Coates et al., 1997; Posthuma, 2010; Work safe Victoria, 2012; ACAS, 2013; Colvin, 2013; Safe Work Australia, 2013). There are five key foundational principles that any conflict management system must address: Acknowledge and accept that conflict will occur, Stakeholders need to know that there is a 'system' for conflict management, the interests of all stakeholders must be addressed, the system must be fair, and be seen to be fair, and a good conflict management system will be easily accessible and safe to use (Coates et al., 1997).

Scholars of industrial relations attest that organizations have to make sustainable business profit. For instance, Coates et al. (1997) identified efficiency gains, lower turnover, better employee-employer relations, potential for a better bottom line, access to information, participation in decision making, discretion over work processes, enhanced employability, support for family responsibilities, affirmation of an independent voice for workers, and input into a range of workplace issues as benefits of high organizational performance for organizations, employees, and unions. In a competitive environment in which organizations must be faster, learner, provide better service, be more efficient, and ultimately more profitable, an empowered, and proactive workforce is thought to be essential (Corsun & Enz, 1999). In other words, the manager-employee relationship be altered in service industries to reflect the impact of the relationship between service workers and customers. Moreover, an empowered workforce is better able to provide

high quality customer service. Thus, a source of competitive advantage capable of differentiating an organization from others is its people and how they work (Coates et al., 1997; Corsun & Enz, 1999; Posthuma, 2010; ACAS, 2013; Colvin, 2013).

Scholars of industrial relations assert that a healthy workplace is a place where everyone works together to achieve an agreed vision for the health and well-being of workers and the surrounding community. They also contend that healthy workplace provides all members of the workforce with physical, psychological, social and organizational conditions that protect and promote health and safety. They also affirm that it enables managers and workers to increase control over their own health and to improve it, and to become more energetic, positive and contented (Sparks et al.2001; Burton, 2010; Dibben & Williams, 2012; Linz & Semykina, 2012; Snape&Redman,2012).

Several factors at a workplace can promote employees' psychosocial well-being and mental health. Especially important in this respect is the opportunity to be included in planning and carrying out activities and events in the workplace (e.g. the opportunity to decide and act in one's chosen way and the potential to predict the consequences of one's action). A related feature is the degree to which the environment encourages or inhibits the utilization or development of skills. Physical security, opportunity for interpersonal contact, and equitable pay are also important (Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1985; Harnois & Gabriel, 2000). Moreover, organizations need to be fully aware of cultural differences in work values, dress code and religion, together with potential problems in communications due to differing proficiencies in the native language used in the organization (Sparks et al., 2001). Diversity management is a management concept which emphasizes the value of difference among people in organizations (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Kamp & Hagedorn-Rasmussen, 2004). Diversity management calls on managers to take advantage of a diverse workforce in order to create sustainable competitive advantage. In other words, looking at the language of diversity management, 'the quest for talents', where every organization should ensure the access of talented people of whatever colour, religion, gender, etc, is persevering (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Kamp & Hagedorn-Rasmussen, 2004).

Some scholars also encourage environment of goodwill and mutual cooperation. For instance, Woolcock (1998) contends that social capital's greatest merit is that it provides a credible point of entry for socio-political issues into a comprehensive multi- and interdisciplinary approach to some of the most pressing issues of our time. In other words, trusting societies not only have stronger incentives to inno-

vate and to accumulate physical capital, but are also likely to have higher returns to accumulation of human capital. Moreover, trust and norms of civic cooperation are essential to well-functioning societies, and to the economic progress of those societies (Coates et al., 1997; Knack & Keefer, 1997; Woolcock, 1998; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Marchington & Suter, 2013).

Trust-sensitive transactions include those in which goods and services are provided in exchange for future payment, employment contracts in which managers rely on employees to accomplish tasks that are difficult to monitor, and investments and savings decisions that rely on assurances by governments or banks that they will not expropriate these assets (Knack & Keefer, 1997). For instance, individuals in higher-trust societies spend less to protect themselves from being exploited in economic transactions and written contracts are less likely to be needed, and they do not have to specify every possible contingency. Moreover, individuals in high-trust societies are also likely to divert fewer resources to protecting themselves-through tax payments, bribes, or private security services and equipment-from unlawful (criminal) violations of their property rights (Coates et al., 1997; Knack & Keefer, 1997; Woolcock, 1998). Furthermore, societies characterized by high levels of trust are also less dependent on formal institutions to enforce agreements (Knack & Keefer, 1997).

Scholars of industrial relations encourage promotion of good governance and democracy throughout all levels of organizations. For instance, Jackson & Muellenborn (2013) assert that institutions serve to coordinate action because they have interpretative meaning to actors. In particular, value-rational aspects of institutions provide interpretive frames for actors to judge the legitimacy of actions and thereby mobilize efforts to enforce institutionalized rules and norms (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003). Another case in point is that of Musso et al. (2000) and Alvesson & Sveningsson (2003) who contend that the function of leadership is to create change as leadership creates new patterns of action and new belief systems.

Empowerment can have a significant impact on a broad range of important outcomes in many organizational contexts. Empowerment is associated with job satisfaction, managerial effectiveness, creativity, and team performance and negatively related to strain and turnover intentions. Moreover, empowerment is the strongest predictor of organizational productivity (Corsun & Enz, 1999; Nalbandian, 1999; Raub & Robert, 2010). Empowering leadership had a robust relationship with both in-role and affiliative extra-role behaviors, and indirectly with challenging extra-

role behaviors via psychological empowerment (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003; Raub & Robert, 2010). An important aspect of a good empowerment program, particularly in societies where managers are not traditionally challenged, debated, or questioned, might be training for leaders on how to work constructively with subordinates who engage in challenging behaviors. Moreover, managers need to ensure that the empowering behaviors demonstrated by leaders align with needs that high power values employees have for achieving power (Stoker, 2006; Raub & Robert, 2010; Bonet, 2014). To improve the chances of success in structural empowerment efforts, supportive and helping relationships should be developed. As these values come to be shared and lived, the quality of work and service provided are likely to increase among employees (Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1985; Corsun & Enz, 1999).

Public value management does offer a new paradigm and a different narrative of reform. Its strength lies in its redefinition of how to meet the challenges of efficiency, accountability, and equity and in its ability to point to a motivational force that does not rely on rules or incentives to drive public service reform. It rests on a fuller and rounder vision of humanity than does either traditional public administration or new public management. People are, it suggests, motivated by their involvement in networks and partnerships, that is, their relationships with others formed in the context of mutual respect and shared learning (Stoker, 2006; Bonet, 2014).

Conclusion

The findings of the study revealed that limited good will and mutual cooperation, limited promotion of good governance and democracy in all levels of management, low organizational profits from research activities and work place disputes are the contemporary issues of industrial relations of employees in Ambo Plant Protection Research Center.

Majority of the respondents perceive that the current management of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center positively reacts to minimize conflicts like workplace disputes, increase organizational profits from research activities, create environment of good will and mutual cooperation, and promote democracy through all levels of management.

Promoting good governance and democracy in all management levels of the organization, creating favorable working environment for employees and environment of good will of employees and mutual cooperation among employees, responding to em-

employees' reported problems promptly and positively; provision of trainings to employees; and encouraging employees to use modern technologies like ICTs in service delivery are some of the strategic measures proposed by participants of focus group discussions and top management levels of the organization to improve the industrial relations of employees of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center.

Based on the findings of the study the following strategic recommendations are proposed to improve the industrial relations of employees of Ambo Plant Protection Research Center:

- Good governance and democracy should be promoted in all levels of the organization to fight corruption and bad governance;
- Appropriate reward and incentive mechanisms should be established for employees;
- Favorable working environment for employees and environment of good will and mutual cooperation should be created;
- More collaboration and partnerships with other organizations at all levels should be strengthened;
- Research on demand driven development issues of local communities and industries should be undertaken;
- Employees should be motivated for hard work;
- Cultural relativism and diversity management in work places should be promoted;
- Experience sharing among employees should be encouraged;
- Periodical discussions between the management and employees on issues of industrial relations should be made;
- New innovations on issues of industrial relations should be promoted and incentives should be provided for new innovations development;
- Employees' reported problems should be addressed promptly and positively;
- Technical on the job trainings should be provided to employees ; and
- Employees should be encouraged to use modern technologies like ICTs in service delivery.

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