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LEVEL OF EMPLOYEES' AWARENESS OF LABOUR DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCEDURES AT IRINGA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the level of employees' awareness of labour dispute resolution procedures at Iringa Municipal Council. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach and a descriptive research design. The study targeted approximately 1,270 employees, from whom 100 respondents were selected using stratified random sampling, while key informants were selected purposively. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, while secondary information was obtained from relevant Council records, labour-related documents, government publications and academic literature. The assessment of awareness focused on employees' understanding of grievance procedures, knowledge of the steps involved in resolving labour disputes, awareness of appropriate reporting channels and understanding of employee rights under labour laws. Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies and percentages, while qualitative information was analysed thematically. The reliability of the research instrument was satisfactory, with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.941. The findings revealed that employees had a generally high level of awareness of labour dispute resolution procedures. Specifically, 93% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they understood grievance procedures, 93% indicated that they knew the steps involved in resolving labour disputes and 93% reported understanding their rights under labour laws. Awareness of the channels used to report labour disputes was comparatively lower, with 78% agreeing or strongly agreeing, while 15% disagreed and 7% remained neutral. The study concludes that employees at Iringa Municipal Council possess substantial awareness of labour dispute resolution procedures, although some gaps remain regarding formal reporting channels. The study recommends that the Council strengthen regular sensitisation and communication programmes, particularly for newly recruited employees, through staff meetings, orientation programmes, circulars and accessible labour-

policy documents to improve employees' understanding of where and how labour disputes should be reported.

KEYWORDS: Employee Awareness; Labour Dispute Resolution; Grievance Procedures; Labour Rights; Reporting Channels; Iringa Municipal Council.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Labour dispute resolution is an important component of sound employment relations because disagreements between employees and employers can affect workplace harmony, employee morale and organisational performance when they are not addressed through appropriate procedures. Labour disputes may arise from wages and salaries, working conditions, working hours, promotion, disciplinary actions, dismissal, interpretation of employment terms and application of labour laws or collective agreements (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2021). Effective dispute resolution therefore requires employees to understand the mechanisms available to them when employment-related disagreements arise. Awareness is particularly important because employees who understand where to report a grievance, whom to approach, the steps involved and the rights and obligations governing the process are better positioned to use established mechanisms appropriately.

At the organisational level, the existence of formal labour dispute resolution procedures does not necessarily mean that employees are able to use them effectively. The effectiveness of such procedures depends partly on employees' knowledge and understanding of the processes established by their organisations and relevant labour institutions. Limited awareness may prevent employees from reporting grievances through the appropriate channels, following required procedures or seeking assistance from responsible authorities. Conversely, adequate awareness can improve employees' ability to identify legitimate employment concerns, initiate appropriate complaints and participate meaningfully in the resolution process. This makes employee awareness an important human resource management consideration in organisations seeking to maintain fairness, transparency and harmonious employment relationships.

Globally, labour dispute resolution systems have been established to provide structured mechanisms through which workplace disagreements can be reported, examined and resolved. However, the continued occurrence of labour disputes demonstrates that the availability of formal procedures alone may not guarantee effective utilisation. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2023) and other institutional evidence indicate that

implementation challenges can arise from inadequate institutional capacity, weak communication and insufficient understanding of established procedures. In this context, employees' awareness becomes particularly important because a procedure can only function effectively when those expected to use it understand its purpose, requirements and available channels. Thus, assessing employees' awareness provides an opportunity to determine whether formal dispute-resolution mechanisms are sufficiently understood at the organisational level.

The issue is also relevant in African public-sector organisations, where labour relations are often influenced by administrative structures, human resource capacity and the implementation of employment policies. Evidence cited in the present study indicates that labour-dispute resolution in African public institutions can be constrained by inadequate training, weak human resource capacity and insufficient understanding of applicable procedures. When employees lack adequate knowledge of grievance procedures and their employment rights, they may rely on informal approaches or fail to pursue legitimate complaints through the appropriate institutional channels. Such situations can contribute to unresolved grievances, mistrust between employees and management and prolonged workplace disagreements. Strengthening employees' awareness is therefore an important step towards ensuring that formal labour-dispute resolution mechanisms are accessible and effectively utilised.

Within East Africa, evidence from Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda indicates that the presence of statutory labour frameworks has not eliminated challenges associated with their implementation. Limited awareness of dispute-resolution procedures, inadequate staffing and insufficient institutional resources have been identified as factors affecting the effective management of labour disputes. This suggests that employees' knowledge of labour-dispute procedures is an important issue within decentralised public organisations, where responsibility for managing employment relations is increasingly exercised at local-government level. Employees need to understand the appropriate channels for reporting grievances and the sequence of actions required to obtain assistance or resolution. Without such awareness, the formal procedures established by law and organisational policy may not achieve their intended purpose.

In Tanzania, labour-dispute resolution operates within a formal legal framework, including the Employment and Labour Relations Act and related labour institutions and regulations. These frameworks provide mechanisms for addressing workplace grievances through procedures such as reporting, mediation, arbitration and adjudication. Nevertheless, evidence

cited in the study indicates continuing challenges relating to procedural awareness, delays in dispute handling and human resource capacity within public institutions. Mpogole (2023), for example, identified limited awareness of dispute-resolution procedures as one of the issues affecting the effectiveness of labour-dispute resolution, while Lema and Mallya (2023) identified weaknesses in human resource systems and training as challenges affecting implementation. These findings demonstrate that having labour laws and procedures in place is insufficient if employees do not adequately understand how those procedures operate.

At the local-government level, employees' awareness becomes particularly significant because municipal councils are responsible for managing employment relations within decentralised public administration. Iringa Municipal Council is required to operate within national labour laws and public-service regulations while addressing employment-related grievances among its workforce. However, the source study identifies limited awareness, communication challenges and inadequate training as among the factors that may hinder effective labour-dispute resolution at the Council. In such an environment, employees' understanding of the procedures available for reporting and resolving workplace disputes is an important area for empirical assessment.

Despite the existence of a legal and institutional framework for labour-dispute resolution in Tanzania, there is limited empirical evidence specifically examining the level of employees' awareness of labour-dispute resolution procedures at Iringa Municipal Council. Existing studies have largely discussed labour-dispute resolution from broader perspectives, including human resource capacity, procedural implementation, communication and institutional challenges. Less attention has been given to determining the extent to which employees themselves understand the procedures they are expected to follow when workplace disputes arise. This creates a contextual and empirical gap that warrants investigation at the municipal level.

Therefore, this study focuses specifically on the level of employees' awareness of labour-dispute resolution procedures at Iringa Municipal Council. The study examines employees' understanding of the procedures for reporting grievances, identifying appropriate authorities, following established steps and accessing available mechanisms for resolving workplace disputes. The focus is important because adequate employee awareness can support appropriate use of institutional mechanisms, improve transparency and contribute to more orderly management of workplace grievances. By assessing the existing level of awareness, the study seeks to provide evidence that can assist Iringa Municipal Council in strengthening employee orientation, labour-law education and communication concerning dispute-

resolution procedures. This focus is directly aligned with the first specific objective of the study.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Literature Review

2.1.1 Policy Implementation Theory

Policy Implementation Theory, developed by Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983), provides a suitable theoretical foundation for assessing the level of employees' awareness of labour dispute resolution procedures at Iringa Municipal Council. The theory argues that the effectiveness of a policy or procedure depends not only on its formulation but also on how it is understood and implemented by the people expected to apply it. In relation to labour dispute resolution, employees need adequate knowledge of grievance procedures, reporting channels, dispute-resolution steps and their rights and obligations under labour laws in order to use established mechanisms appropriately. Where employees have limited awareness, they may fail to follow prescribed procedures, report grievances through inappropriate channels or delay seeking institutional assistance. The theory therefore provides a useful basis for examining whether employees at Iringa Municipal Council possess sufficient knowledge and understanding of the procedures established for addressing workplace disputes. This application is consistent with the operationalisation of the selected objective, which measures awareness through knowledge of grievance procedures, understanding of dispute-resolution steps, awareness of reporting channels and awareness of employee rights under labour laws.

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

2.2.1 Level of Employees' Awareness of Labour Dispute Resolution Procedures

Mpogole (2023) examined labour dispute resolution mechanisms in Tanzanian public institutions using a cross-sectional design and questionnaires and interviews. The study found that although labour dispute-resolution procedures were clearly established under Tanzanian labour laws, many employees had limited knowledge of the formal steps required when lodging grievances. Limited awareness was associated with delays in handling disputes and increased escalation to external mechanisms such as mediation and arbitration. The study recommended strengthening employee awareness through training and internal communication. These findings are directly relevant to the present study because they demonstrate that the existence of formal legal procedures does not necessarily ensure that employees understand how to use them. However, the study covered selected public institutions rather than focusing specifically on employees at Iringa Municipal Council.

Kessy and Mrema (2021) investigated labour relations management in Tanzanian public-sector organisations using a descriptive research design, surveys and document reviews. Their findings indicated that many employees lacked adequate understanding of internal grievance-handling procedures, resulting in procedural non-compliance and increased workplace conflicts. The study further identified limited awareness and weak communication as important barriers to effective labour dispute resolution. These findings support the argument that employees' knowledge of established grievance procedures is necessary for the effective management of workplace disputes. The study is particularly relevant to the present research because it was conducted within the Tanzanian public-sector context; however, it examined public-sector organisations broadly rather than determining the specific level of awareness among employees of Iringa Municipal Council.

Namusonge and Karanja (2021) examined determinants of effective labour dispute management in county governments in Kenya using a descriptive survey design and simple random sampling. The study found that employees who were more aware of labour dispute-resolution policies were more likely to use formal grievance channels, which contributed to more timely resolution of disputes. The study concluded that awareness campaigns and clear communication of labour policies could improve dispute-resolution outcomes. Similarly, Mwesigwa and Nabaho (2022), in their study of decentralisation and human resource management challenges in East African local governments, found that inadequate awareness programmes contributed to employees' limited knowledge of formal labour dispute-resolution procedures and recurring workplace disputes. These studies demonstrate the importance of employee awareness in local-government employment relations. Nevertheless, both studies were conducted outside Tanzania, creating a contextual gap that the present study addresses by assessing employees' awareness of labour dispute-resolution procedures specifically at Iringa Municipal Council.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed-methods research approach and a descriptive research design to assess the level of employees' awareness of labour dispute resolution procedures at Iringa Municipal Council. The study targeted approximately 1,270 employees, from whom 100 respondents were selected using stratified random sampling, while key informants, including Human Resource officers and departmental heads, were selected through purposive sampling. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to selected employees and semi-structured interviews conducted with key informants, while secondary

data were obtained from relevant Council records, labour-related documents, government publications and academic literature. The study focused specifically on employees' awareness of labour dispute resolution procedures, covering their understanding of grievance procedures, knowledge of the steps involved in resolving labour disputes, awareness of channels for reporting labour disputes, and understanding of their rights under labour laws. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, while qualitative data were analysed thematically to provide further explanations of employees' awareness. The validity of the instruments was enhanced through expert review, pilot testing and construct-validity assessment, while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, which produced a coefficient of 0.941, indicating high internal consistency. Ethical principles, including voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and participants' freedom to withdraw, were observed throughout the study.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Assessment of the Level of Employees' Awareness of Labour Dispute Resolution Procedure

The researcher sought to assess the level of employees' awareness of the labour dispute resolution procedure at Iringa Municipal Council. Respondents were presented with four statements covering their understanding of grievance procedures, knowledge of the steps involved in resolving labour disputes, awareness of reporting channels and understanding of their rights under labour laws. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The findings are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Assessment of the Level of Employees' Awareness of Labour Dispute Resolution Procedure.

Statement	SD %	D %	N %	A %	SA %
I understand the grievance procedures used in this organisation.	0.0	0.0	7.0	55.0	38.0
I know the steps involved in resolving labour disputes.	0.0	0.0	7.0	60.0	33.0
I am aware of the channels used to report labour disputes.	0.0	15.0	7.0	44.0	34.0
I understand my rights under labour laws.	0.0	0.0	7.0	39.0	54.0

Source: Field Data (2026)

4.2 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings in Table 4.2 indicate that employees at Iringa Municipal Council had a generally high level of awareness of labour dispute resolution procedures. Regarding grievance procedures, 55% agreed and 38% strongly agreed, giving a combined positive response of 93%. This suggests that most employees understood the procedures used to raise and address workplace grievances. The finding is further supported by the qualitative evidence, where Respondent 1 stated that most employees were familiar with grievance-reporting procedures because the Council regularly communicated workplace policies and procedures.

Similarly, 93% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they knew the steps involved in resolving labour disputes, with 60% agreeing and 33% strongly agreeing. This indicates that employees were generally familiar with the processes to be followed when labour disputes arose. Respondent 1 explained that employees were informed about procedures including consultation and mediation, while Respondent 2 observed that knowledge of the dispute-resolution process helped employees and management resolve issues more quickly and fairly.

Awareness of the channels used to report labour disputes was comparatively lower. 44% agreed and 34% strongly agreed, giving a combined positive response of 78%, while 15% disagreed and 7% remained neutral. This indicates that although most employees knew where to report labour disputes, a notable proportion were not fully aware of the available reporting mechanisms. The qualitative findings similarly indicated that newer employees might not be fully aware of all formal channels, including supervisors, departmental heads, the Human Resource Office and workers' representatives.

The strongest awareness was observed in employees' understanding of their rights under labour laws. 39% agreed and 54% strongly agreed, producing a combined positive response of 93%, while only 7% were neutral and none disagreed. This demonstrates that most employees were knowledgeable about their labour rights and protections. The qualitative responses further indicated that awareness of labour laws helped employees understand their rights and responsibilities and encouraged them to address workplace concerns through appropriate procedures.

Overall, the evidence from your own Table 4.2 supports the conclusion that employees at Iringa Municipal Council had a high level of awareness of labour dispute resolution procedures. Three of the four indicators recorded 93% positive responses, while awareness of reporting channels recorded 78% positive responses. The main weakness identified was

therefore not general awareness, but incomplete awareness of formal reporting channels among some employees.

5. Summary of Findings

The study found that employees at Iringa Municipal Council generally had a high level of awareness of labour dispute resolution procedures. The findings showed that 93% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they understood grievance procedures, 93% knew the steps involved in resolving labour disputes and 93% understood their rights under labour laws. Awareness of the channels used to report labour disputes was comparatively lower at 78%, with 15% disagreeing and 7% remaining neutral. Overall, the findings indicate that employees possess substantial knowledge of labour dispute resolution procedures, although some gaps remain, particularly regarding the formal channels for reporting labour disputes.

6. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the level of employees' awareness of labour dispute resolution procedures at Iringa Municipal Council is generally high. Employees demonstrated adequate understanding of grievance procedures, dispute-resolution steps and their rights under labour laws. However, the relatively lower awareness of reporting channels indicates that knowledge is not uniform across all aspects of the procedure. Strengthening awareness of formal reporting mechanisms would therefore improve employees' ability to use appropriate channels when labour disputes arise.

7. RECOMMENDATION

Iringa Municipal Council should strengthen regular sensitisation and communication programmes on labour dispute resolution procedures, with particular emphasis on the formal channels for reporting labour disputes. The Council should ensure that employees, especially newly recruited staff, receive clear information through staff meetings, orientation programmes, circulars and accessible labour-policy documents. This would help close the identified awareness gap and enable all employees to understand where and how to report labour disputes appropriately. The recommendation directly responds to the finding that 22% of respondents were either neutral or disagreed regarding awareness of reporting channels.

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