

## **Industrial Action A Setback to Sound Employment Relations In The Platinum Mining Sector In Rustenburg, South Africa (2012–2016)**

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**Abstract:** Industrial action in South Africa's mining sector has become a 'syndrome' for time immemorial. This study intended to investigate the causes of such labour unrest in South Africa's Platinum mining sector in the Rustenburg area. Available literature revealed that there was a multiplicity of factors that influenced industrial action. These factors can be categorized into three distinct categories namely; external factors, individual and organizational factors. The literature further revealed that equal opportunities for employment, involvement and participation of workers, transparency and sound corporate governance, sound labour laws complimented by training, development and career growth opportunities are important in reducing labour unrest in any organization or sector. The research methodology was largely quantitative in nature based on a survey design. 56 respondents were identified using the stratified sampling techniques and were asked to complete a self-administered structured questionnaire. The study was guided by the research objectives. Data presentation and analysis were done using descriptive statistics which culminated in a number of exciting findings. The results showed that a number of factors contributed to industrial action, the major ones being; lack of transparency and sound corporate governance evidenced by the lack of employee involvement and participation, existence of discrimination despite the collapse of apartheid regime in the early 1990's, poor occupational health and safety standards, lack of government enforcement of the Mining Charter, deplorable accommodation for majority who are semi-skilled workers and generally low remuneration. The major recommendations were that; there was need for provision of decent accommodation to mining workers, drastic improvement on health and safety in the Platinum mines, tolerance of existence by both parties, remuneration based on organizational performance and external factors like price of platinum on the international scene and eradication of discrimination especially along racial lines.

**Keywords:** Employment relations, Industrial action, Labour laws, Labour unrest, Mining charter

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### **I. Introduction**

This paper is a report on the study conducted to have empirical evidence on the poor industrial relations in the Platinum Mining Sector in Rustenburg, South Africa as manifested by numerous cases of industrial action. The paper covers the background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, Literature Review, Methodology, Results, Conclusions and Recommendations and the list of references used.

### **II. Background Of The Study**

The Platinum industry has been known to be one of the most lucrative mining sectors in the world. Platinum is a transition metal that is used mostly in making catalytic converters of cars in order to reduce pollution. The Karoo region in South Africa has the largest platinum deposits known. As a result, this province is the largest platinum source of platinum in the world. Rustenburg is the fastest growing city in South Africa. From 1995 to 2013, Rustenburg's population grew by 411%, from an initial population of 75 000 to 383 000 (Segal, 2014; Twala, 2013). The platinum mining business attracts employees from other provinces within South Africa and from neighbouring countries as well. In recent years the price of platinum on the world market has been declining. The platinum sector has not been spared from industrial action (strikes) that occur in South Africa every year as workers demand a wage increment to meet the rising cost of living. Some of these strikes, turned violent resulting in the loss of property and even life. Before 2012 the main workers' union in the mining section was the National Union of Mine workers (NUM), a union which is viewed as an affiliation of the current ruling party, the African National Congress [ANC]. In 2012, a workers' union which is perceived to be militant

known as the Association of Mine workers and Construction Union (AMCU), was formed and a lot of workers deserted NUM to join it. This workers' union is the one to which the majority of mine workers in Rustenburg have since been affiliated to. This move by workers has been seen by some analysts as an expression of their growing impatience as a result of unresolved labour related issues that could not be dealt with effectively by NUM.

In 2012, AMCU demanded that workers be paid a minimum of ZAR12 500 per month. Large platinum mining firms on the other hand were offering an increase of 9% in the first year, 1,8% in the second year and 7,5% in the third year which would then increase entry-level wages from ZAR 9 295 per month to ZAR11 746 per month in the third year. The irreconcilable differences culminated in a massive strike. The strike turned violent resulting in the death of some mine workers in what was believed to be a result of picketing and poor decisions by some members of the police force. 34 protesters were shot by police officers during this wage strike. This labour unrest triggered poor industrial relations in South Africa and helped knock about 25% of the rand's value. In 2014 workers from 3 large Platinum mining firms went on a five months' wage strike. It is estimated that ZAR10 billion was lost as a result of this strike with workers losing ZAR 1 billion in income, thereby reducing their spending power and the creation of negative investor sentiments (Segal, 2014). The workers pointed out that the mining companies lacked goodwill in dealing with labour related issues. On the other hand, the employers argued that the demands by workers were not sustainable because of the falling price of platinum and rise in the costs of other inputs such as electricity and transport (Segal, 2014).

### **III. Statement Of The Problem**

The rampant cases of industrial action (strikes) in the Platinum mining sector over the past five years, have resulted in continued loss of production and revenue for the companies. This has had ripple effects in downstream businesses as well. The retrenchment of employees and the closure and sale of some sections of the business units has created a wave of fear and despair amongst employees and that has brought down their morale. In addition, this has also created a wider gap of mistrust between the employers and the employees thereby jeopardising sound industrial relations. These are symptoms of deep rooted problems within organisations in the platinum mining industry. It is imperative that not only the symptoms but the issues that create these symptoms be addressed. Such poor industrial and labour relations, have contributed their fair share of problems bedevilling not only the platinum mining sector or entire mining industry, but to the whole of South African economy as a whole.

### **IV. Objectives Of The Study**

The study wanted to accomplish the following through empirical study;

- (i) To identify the reasons for the recurring incidences of industrial action (labour unrest) in the platinum mining sector in Rustenburg.
- (ii) To find out the magnitude of retrenchments in the platinum mining sector.
- (iii) To identify the adverse effects of industrial action in the platinum mining sector.
- (iv) To recommend proactive actions that can be implemented in order to improve labour relations in the platinum mining industry by averting industrial action.

### **V. Research Questions**

The study attempted to fully answer the following questions (sub-problems) after investigation.

- (i) What are the reasons for the recurring incidences of industrial action (labour unrest) in the platinum mining sector in Rustenburg?
- (ii) What is the magnitude of retrenchments in the Platinum mining sector?
- (iii) What are the adverse effects of industrial action in the Platinum mining sector?
- (iv) Which proactive actions can be implemented in order to improve labour relations in the Platinum mining industry by averting industrial action?

### **VI. Literature Review**

#### **6.1 Conceptual framework**

##### **6.1.1 Industrial action**

Also known as labour unrest or job action usually refers to a collective measure or action taken by a workers committee, trade unions or other organised labour as a result of unresolved conflict(s) with the employer(s) and such action is meant to pressurize the employer(s) to accede to the employees demand(s) (Uzhenyu, 2015). This usually happens when there are disagreements regarding the conditions of service, contractual obligations or when employees are forced out of work due to contract termination and no agreement being reached. Employer would be downsizing operations in order to cut usually high wage bills. Industrial action may take place in the context of a labour dispute or may be meant to effect political or social change.

This form of communication tends to be workers only means to voice their concerns in order to get what they want. The use or threat of industrial action is regarded as one of the most controversial issue in industrial relations (Jubenkanda, 2010). There are some people who argue that industrial action is potentially harmful yet others argue that industrial action can influence both the management–employee relationship at the workplace because if it were not the threat or use of power, collective bargaining would have been extremely difficult since both sides would have no pressure to modify their original positions and reach an agreement (Thomas and Jain, 2004; Vuuren, 2010). Strike action is one of the most written about and most obvious form of industrial action, which sometimes, if not always, induces parties to reach an acceptable solution to a problem. However, one has to emphasize that strike action is only one of many measures or forms, which is classified as an industrial action (Blyton and Turnbull, 1994).

### **6.1.2 Function of industrial action**

Industrial action may be viewed from three different conflict perspectives (Mudyawabikwa and Sambureni, 2004);

- (i) Conflict represents a challenge to the internal order and stability of any system and hence needs to be controlled or even curtailed. Without the necessary stability and order at the workplace, in the industry (sector) or country at large, there is bound to be chaos and lawlessness at times.
- (ii) Conflict can also be viewed as a prelude to the development of a new social order. There is bound to be change if only the existing status quo is challenged and overthrown. Thus conflict becomes a necessary tool for positive change, either within organization, industry (sector) or country.
- (iii) The open expression of conflict often leads to the creation of stability once people have identified their different interests within a particular social system.

Strike action is often seen either as a rational or irrational act. There are those who would want to argue that conflicts of interests should be resolved without withdrawing labour since there are mechanisms provided for to sort out any differences (Mudyawabikwa, 2004). The second argument is that the cost to employees of undertaking such action is far greater than the intended purpose. However, there are others who strongly believe that it is rational to do so for various reasons. It is a “calculative attempt to obtain alterations in the work situation in order to establish new and more favourable terms under which the employment may continue, its immediate purpose is to create temporary industrial disorder” (Danscrean, 2006). The disorder is definitely intended to be used as an intervention strategy within the negotiating interaction. Certainly, industrial action is used when talks and verbal persuasion have failed to attain the desired objectives. This has been the problem in South Africa including the Platinum mining sector as was evidenced by the unfortunate Marikana massacre (Twala, 2013).

### **6.1.3 Forms of Industrial Action**

There are two major forms of industrial action; the unorganized individual forms of action and the organized collective forms of action. Both forms of action express discontent about certain issues at the workplace. The unorganized conflict is the way open to them as individuals, while organized conflict is part and parcel of collective forms of consciousness that is utilized to change the situation which is unacceptable within the employment relationship (Sambureni, 2001)

- (i) **Unorganized forms of action** – this includes absenteeism, theft, high labour turnover, go slow, deliberate destruction of property or machinery, feigned illness, self-inflicted injuries, lack of commitment to the organization, loafing, job-hopping etc. These forms of action are what are normally call hidden forms of resistance, which have always tended to be hidden and silent, rather than dramatic and articulate (Sambureni, 2001). It appears this form of industrial action is very rare in the Platinum mining sector in Rustenburg.
- (ii) **Organised forms of action** – employee discontent may be expressed in a variety of organized collective action that includes withdrawal of co-operation, work to rule, overtime ban, collective go slows, strike action, work-in/sit-in, etc. This form of industrial action appears to be prevalent in the Platinum mining sector in Rustenburg (Segal, 2014)

### **6.1.4 Why industrial action?**

*Irreconcilable differences* between the employer and employees over the following issues can culminate in an industrial action (Clegg, 1979; Thomas and Jain, 2004).

- (i) Basic issues such as wages, hours of work and benefits.
- (ii) Solidarity issues such as worker rights, sometimes union recognition, closed shop, inter-union disputes and sympathetic action.
- (iii) Frictional issues such as working arrangements, discipline, redundancy, employment of certain classes of people.

It is important to take cognizance of the fact that no single causal factor can adequately explain industrial action in different organizations or workplaces. One has to analyze the motives, attitudes and perceptions of the participants. Furthermore, industrial action does not perform exactly the same function in all organizations and may, therefore, have different meanings and significance (Blyton and Turnbull, 1994). It is against this background provided by above Literature that motivated this researcher to look at the scenario in the Platinum mining sector in Rustenburg, South Africa.

## **6.2 Related empirical evidence on the causes of problems in industrial relations in South Africa's mining sector:**

### **(i) Rivalry between labour unions**

Before 2012 the main labour union representing all the three main mining companies was the National Union of Mine workers(NUM) which is an affiliate of COSATU (Segal, 2014; Twala, 2013). In 2012 the national union of mine worker refused to address salary issues affecting the rock drillers at Impala Platinum. NUM was adamant on meeting the demands of a specific unit to be awarded a specific wage hike but was insisting on the same salary increment across board. The Association of Mine workers and ConstructionUnion (AMCU) capitalised on the failure of NUM to address the specific grievances of its members and successfully represented the rock drillers. Following the same model, AMCU initiated strikes took place at Anglo American Platinum and Lonmin. Workers deserted NUM in protest of the organization's failure to handle the grievances of workers. The workers saw in AMCU an organization that would represent the interests of the workers which the workers perceived were not being addressed by NUM. Thirty-seven thousand (37 000) workers deserted NUM for the AMCU. By 2014 AMCU was the main trade union in the North West province (Segal, 2014). In 2013 NUM demanded a wage increment of sixty percent for entry level workers whilst AMCU shortly thereafter demanded hundred percent increment for entry level workers. This amount of increment was not sustainable in an economy with single digit inflation and interest rate. In their fight to be perceived as strong and not weak among the low wage earners these workers' unions demands were motivated by the need to please the workers regardless of the declining commodity prices particularly that of platinum (Segal, 2014).

### **(ii) Falling platinum prices**

Segal (2014) and Twala (2013) cited this as one of the major problems affecting sound industrial relations in the Platinum mining sector



**Fig 1** showing platinum prices between 2011-2015. Source <http://www.infomine.com/investment/metal-prices/platinum> (accessed on 05/02/2016)

The price of platinum decreased by over fifty percent year on year from 2011 to 2015 yet the cost of labour continued to balloon as the two main trade unions continued to fight for dominance in the mining sector

(Segal, 2014, Twala, 2013). This was also worsened by the fact that a new political party, the Economic Freedom Party (EFP) took the incident of the Marikana shooting and used it as a campaign strategy. The EFP leader took a swipe at ANC and attacked the Vice president Cyril Ramaphosa and blamed him for the shooting because he was a shareholder in Lonmin. EFP was urging its members to join AMCU since it was not aligned to the ruling party ANC. Since NUM is affiliated to the ANC through COSATU, the labour unrest became a platform for political parties to score points against each other prior to the national elections in 2014 (Segal, 2014).

**(i) Big Unions bargaining on behalf of other unions**

Current institutional arrangements such as the labour legislation is characterised by *de facto union majoritarianism* in which the majority union bargains on behalf of all unionised employees. This effectively exclude other legitimate players by raising the recognition thresholds for minority unions to gain entry to collective bargaining forums (Harvey, 2013). The monetary benefits are significant since workers that are not affiliated to the majority workers' union must pay a certain amount to be collectively represented.

**(ii) Ineffectiveness in labour movements to handle the workers' grievances.**

When South Africa got its independence in 1994, it crafted a labour policy that was sound and developed a culture that enabled labour, the workers' representatives and other stakeholders to deal with labour issues in sound ways. As the years passed, members of the workers' union (COSATU) joined ANC since they had strong ties (Segal, 2014).

The organization became complacent in the execution of its key duties which was to represent workers. The continued discontent as a result of NUM's failure to represent workers effectively created cracks in the alliance between labour, the employers and the workers' representatives. Since NUM is aligned to the ruling party, workers perceived that NUM could not be trusted since it was close to ANC which in a major beneficiary of tax from the mines. Workers perceived that NUM could not act as both referee and player which could result in conflict of interests. The militant union, AMCU, saw an opportunity in NUM's weakness and took advantage of it (Segal, 2014, Twala, 2013). The workers perceived AMCU as an independent workers' union that could genuinely fight for the rights of workers. It seemed like the relationship between ANC and NUM had become an achilles' heel in the discharge of its duties (NUM).

**(iii) Failure by the government to ensure that the mining charter was implemented.**

The anger of the workers and the mining communities were not only directed at the mining companies only but also at the government. The mining charter of 2002 was accused of having failed to consider the rights of communities in terms of community consultation, community input into planning for mining developments and direct control of shares in companies. The mine workers complained about the government's ineffectiveness in implementing the mining charter which among others required companies to provide housing for all (Twala, 2013). Millions of dollars in royalty fees paid by industry into government administered banking accounts allegedly vanished and three independent probes have been launched to trace cash that was meant to improve the lives of mining communities ([www.fin24.com/companies/Amplats-set](http://www.fin24.com/companies/Amplats-set) accessed on 17/01/2016). It seems much still need to be done to address the housing problems for employees in mine workers and the supporting infrastructure as stipulated in Section 2, 7 of the mining charter. The living conditions of lowly paid workers has been pathetic and the majority of them still did not live with their families because there were no family units built by the company for the workers during apartheid. This set up frustrated the workers whose families were living far away from their work places or were living in informal structures with poor infrastructural support.

**(iv) The position the employers have taken in the mining industry.**

The workers in the mining industry can generally be classified into two main groups namely; workers that are employed by the mines directly and those workers that are employed through labour brokers (Segal, 2014). The workers employed by labour brokers are generally exploited and some of them do not have benefits such as pension and medical schemes. Workers have thus perceived the mining companies as exploitative, making super profits by exploiting them.

**(v) Poverty:**

Most of the strikes that have occurred in South Africa have been over salary increment (Segal, 2014, Twala, 2013, Vuuren, 2010). The pressure on workers to meet the financial needs of their families is one of the main causes of the strikes. The retrenchments that have also been occurring in the mining industry have also contributed to some strikes as workers seek for protection from job loss through strikes so that the employers and government can address their concerns.

## VII. Methodology

### 7.1 Approach

This study largely used the quantitative paradigm as it relied on the use of a largely structured questionnaire (Cresswell (2003). Therefore, the positivism philosophy guided the selection of the design, data collection, sampling and analysis methods (techniques).

## 7.2 Research design

The design for this study was **descriptive survey research design**. Survey was chosen as a research technique in this study to investigate the strained industrial relations as a result of industrial action in the Platinum mining sector in South Africa in order to get real experiences of those who had full knowledge and have been involved rather than relying on historical or secondary data (Kennedy, 2009).

## 7.3 Subjects

### 7.3.1 Target Population

The population of the study was composed of mining workers, engineers, administrators, trade union officials and workers drawn from the Platinum industry in Rustenburg.

### 7.3.2 Sample and sampling procedure

The method used to identify the sample composition (respondents) was the **Stratified sampling technique**. It is a procedure that ensures that all key stakeholders are accommodated on a proportional basis to get a holistic overview of the research problem and allowing objectivity in the selection of respondents (Leedy and Omrod, 2015; Khothari, 2014).

## 7.4 Research instruments

The research tool used was a largely structured questionnaire. The researcher avoided use of interviews due to their lack of objectivity as well as avoiding prejudices, bias and halo effect (Cresswell, 2003, Kothari, 2014). The questionnaire was crafted based on the Research objectives outlined on IV above. The instrument was pre-tested to enhance its validity and reliability (Bless and Higson-Smith, 1999).

## 7.5 Research Ethics

Ethics is a discipline that deals with moral principles, values and the obligation to know what is good or bad. Research ethics provided the researchers with the know-how about how to conduct the research morally taking into account four key principles of informed consent, confidentiality, honesty and integrity; and anonymity on the part of respondents (Kennedy, 2009).

## 7.8 Data Presentation and Analysis

Data was presented using largely descriptive statistics, which included use of tables, graphs and averages. Results were discussed in order to ensure their relevance to the study and also cross examining with existing literature (literature review) for comparative analysis.

## VIII. Data Presentation And Discussion

This was based on the actual 56 questionnaires that were returned from the initial 80 distributed (70% response rate)

### 8.1 Gender composition of respondents

**Table 1** showing gender compositions

Gender	%
male	87
female	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Majority of respondents were males. The results confirm to the general gender distribution in the mining sector which is skewed in favor of male workers as evidenced by s study done in the mining industry by Twala (2013).

### 8.2 Age group of respondents

**Table 2** showing age composition

Age (years)	%
below 25	0
25 to 35	30
35 to 49	60
50 and above	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Majority of respondents were in the age group 35 to 49 years. The results indicated that a number of respondents were mature and should have known the platinum mining industry for quite sometime

### 8.3 Highest level of education attained

**Table 3** showing level of education.

Education level	%
'0' level	12
'A' level	8

diploma	33
degree	24
metric	13
post graduate	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Majority of respondents had diplomas and a sizeable number with degrees. All respondents had received education with the minimum being ‘O’ level, which showed that they were highly literate and were able to answer the questionnaire fully, thereby enhancing the validity of data collected (Khothari, 2014).

**8.4 Position of respondents**

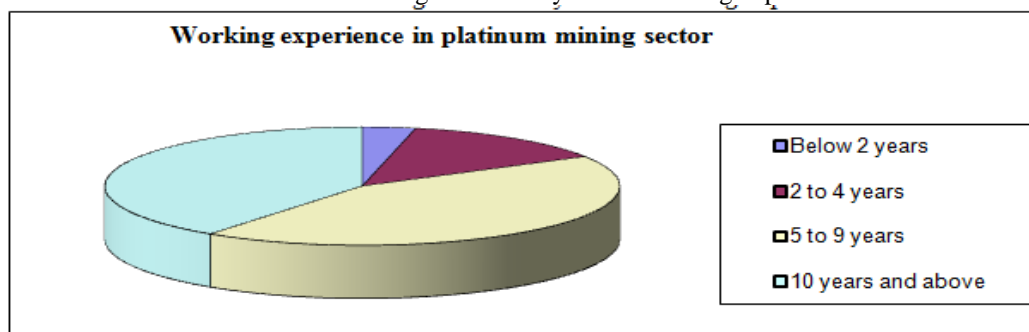
**Table 4** showing position of respondents.

<b>Position</b>	<b>%</b>
Ordinary worker	20
Technician	30
Administrator	7
Engineer /Manager	27
Trainer / Facilitator	5
Artisan	8
Boiler maker	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Majority were technicians and engineers as well as ordinary employees. The results showed that almost all key stakeholders were represented which should have improved the validity of data (Khothari, 2014).

**8.5 Number of working experience in the platinum mining sector**

**Table 5** showing number of years of working experience



**Figure 1:** showing working experience in the platinum mining sector.

The results showed that about 92% of the respondents had been working in the mining sector for at least 5 years which showed that they were mostly fully aware of the problem at hand and this gives credibility to the results of this study. This has been supported by Twala (2013) in his related study that those with more than five years were familiar with the issues that culminated in the unfortunate Marikana massacre which was based on a protracted wrangle over working conditions that had been characterized by lots of work stoppages (industrial action/strikes).

**8.6 Comment on the relationship between workers and employers**

**Table 6** showing workers–employer’s relationship

Relationship	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Not sure (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
There is lack of workers involvement and participation in key decisions affecting the platinum mining sector	33	41	7	17	2
There is no cordial relationship despite provision of democracy in the country’s constitution and labour laws	35	46	5	8	6
There is mistrust between the parties	30	53	3	11	3
There is confrontation approach instead of dialogue or win–win situation	20	52	21	3	4
A boss-servant relationship still exists as the sectors’ power and influence is still largely dominated by whites	27	33	13	24	3

The above results indicated that there is lack of sound industrial relations between the workers and the employers. This is strongly evidenced by strong sentiments raised by workers that they were being left out in dealing with key decisions and a boss-servant relationship mentality still existed even after independence as the sector still was still largely dominated by whites who held key and influential positions as raised by Segal

(2014). The absence of a cordial dialogue platform was exacerbated by mistrust between the two parties, which culminated in confrontational approach as what happened with the Marikana massacre (Twala, 2013). The absence of sound industrial relations in the Platinum mining sector and the entire mining sector has been a major area of concern in South Africa and there was need for a holistic approach by all key stakeholders namely; workers, employers and government in line with suggestions by Vuuren (2010) that such inclusivity of the social partners would bring sanity and stability to the economy and avoid a repetition of the ‘‘Marikana massacre madness’’ whose effects went beyond national and racial boundaries.

It appears that industrial and labour relations in the platinum mining sector could take long to improve as the contentions issue of racial discrimination still persists. Workers seem to feel that the employers are largely concerned with amassing wealth at the expense of safety at the work place. The employer’s stance of always threatening to close their mines in the event of conflict seemed to be supported by the existence of mistrust and racial discrimination which fuelled hatred and a confrontational approach as suggested by Twala (2013). The fact that mistrust and lack of power sharing on decision making was tantamount to continue and create further hostile relations and rift between the two parties.

### 8.7 Level of retrenchment and casualization of labour in the Platinum mining sector

**Table 7** showing level of retrenchment and casualization of labour

Measure	Strongly agree%	Agree %	Not sure %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree%
Retrenchment is high	27	36	6	17	14
Casualization of labour is high	32	27	4	15	22

Retrenchments and casualization of labour were rated as generally on the high side. Retrenchments constitute one of the major frictional areas as raised by Sambureni and Mudyawabikwa (2004) which result in serious differences on the way they should be handled. Casualization of labour is viewed as lack of commitment on the employer’s part to treat workers as key assets. These two frictional issues contribute a lot to industrial action as workers usually resist such moves since their future looks bleak because they are usually associated with non-provision of social security and protection which are key to one’s welfare usually upon retirement (Uzhenyu, 2015).

### 8.8 Major causes of industrial action

**Table 8** showing major causes of industrial action

Cause	Strongly agree%	Agree %	Not sure %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree%
Unilateral salary increment by employers without agreeing with labour bodies (trade unions)	17	30	23	23	7
Sharp price drop of platinum resulting in reduced profits to effect meaningful salary and benefits increase	23	33	13	23	8
Financial pressure to meet family needs worsened by depreciating rand currency	34	60	0	3	3
Ineffective handling of grievances by trade unions to have them quickly addressed	20	57	16	7	0
Lack of government enforcement of the mining charter	30	33	13	13	11
Exploitation by labour brokers who do not provide medical and pension benefits	33	40	10	7	10
Poor health and safety conditions at the workplace	17	20	17	40	6
Lack of provision of decent housing and sound infrastructure development	40	21	12	20	7
Political interferences fuelling situation when there is impasse or deadlock during negotiations	37	32	8	12	11
Lack of understanding about economic and global issues by workers	25	21	5	26	23
Lack of transparency on mines’ financial positions	31	25	6	16	22
Lack of blacks representation in senior management	43	41	3	6	7
Intimidation and victimisation of workers committee /trade union members	54	39	3	2	2

The results showed that there was a plethora of problems that contributed to industrial action (strikes). These included; the lack of provision of decent housing and sound infrastructure development, exploitation by labour brokers who do not provide medical and pension benefits, financial pressure to meet family needs worsened by the depreciating rand national currency. This was also exacerbated by the ineffective manner in which trade unions slowly moved to have grievances quickly addressed, as well as the lack of government enforcement of the mining charter. Also these problems are in tandem with the results and sentiments of Twala (2013) and partly of Thomas and Jain (2004). Also such problems had been experienced in the United Kingdom (UK) coal mining industry which had led to almost its demise as highlighted by Clegg (1979) and Ackers



(2002). Such causes of labour unrest are not only peculiar to South Africa's platinum mining industry but also cut across a number of countries including Zimbabwe as raised by Uzhenyu (2015) as well as Sambureni and Mudyawabikwa (2004). This shows how complicated the industrial relations scenario in South Africa has been like, and that is why industrial action is always prevalent as observed by Vuuren (2010).

## **IX. Conclusions**

The conclusions have been made on the basis of research objectives outlined on IV. This is commensurate with a quantitative study as suggested by Cresswell (2003), Kennedy (2009) and Khothari (2014).

### **9.1 To identify the reasons for the recurring incidences of industrial action in the Platinum mining sector.**

The study concluded that there was generally hostile relationship, which brought a wide rift between Mining firms owners who were largely whites and black workers. The study established a plethora of challenges, which culminated in recurrence of industrial action (strikes). The major ones included; lack of provision of safety and decent accommodation to black employees, lack of government enforcement of the Mining charter, failure by employers to honour or fulfil promises, political interferences, racial discrimination and generally low remuneration.

### **9.2 To find out the magnitude of retrenchments in the Platinum mining sector.**

The study revealed that the level of retrenchment was still worrisome to mine workers despite the fact that the rate had gone down between 2013 and 2015 relative to the period before that.

### **9.3 To determine the adverse effects of industrial action in the Platinum mining sector.**

There has been a long stand-off and rift between employers and workers which has dampened the spirit of sound labour relations. The numerous work stoppages had caused loss of production resulting in failure to meet targets as well as loss of wages and at times loss of employment for those found guilty of initiating illegal industrial action (strike). Also political interferences had divided the country along racial overtones (lines).

The study revealed that workers wanted transparency in the reporting of financial matters, urgent improvement on provision of decent accommodation, provision of good occupational health and safety, honouring by employers of promises made during negotiations, compliance with the Labour Relations Act, implementation of the mining charter, improved remuneration and other means that enhanced social security and protection

## **X. Recommendations**

In light of the Conclusions made on IX above, the study came up with the following possible recommendations to avert the cases of labour unrest (strikes) in the Platinum mining sector in Rustenburg. These recommendations are supposed to address the last objective raised on IV which was... **To establish proactive actions that can be identified and be implemented to improve labour relations in the platinum mining industry.**

### **10.1 Labour law reforms**

The Republic of South Africa government should spearhead the enforcement of the Mining charter and amend the Labour Relations Act so that employers do not exploit workers and that they provide the necessary infrastructure and operational framework in order to create cordial and conducive working environment.

### **10.2 Improved corporate governance**

There was urgent need to ensure that all mines put a sound corporate governance framework. This should include having company boards with black representation in senior management positions, transparency in the financial matters of the mining firms so that workers have correct financial status information. Above all, communication at all levels should be encouraged especially by also initiating involvement and participation of workers in all major decisions affecting the mining firms and all other key stakeholders.

### **10.3 Provision of decent accommodation**

The issue of accommodation was one of the most sensitive area which always made workers disgruntled. As such mining firms should consider provision of decent accommodation as a priority. This should enhance the workers' welfare and motivation.

### **10.4 Improving occupational safety by reducing occupational hazards and accidents.**

Mining firms should prioritise occupational safety by improving employee health and safety to reduce rampant cases of casualties and fatalities at the workplace

### **10.5 Use of third party conflict resolution mechanism**

There is urgent need to introduce a business culture of settling disputes through use of third party interventions such as use of arbitration, mediation and conciliation.

### **10.6 Education of all key stakeholders**

In order to promote sanity at the workplace, there is need for vigorous education campaign that should include the police, workers and employers. The police force should be encouraged not to use force to control an industrial action (strike) like what they did with the Marikana massacre shooting incident but should rather

promote dialogue between the conflicting parties. Workers should be educated about the adverse consequences of strikes such as loss of jobs and wages, disruption to production, damage to company property etc. Employers should be educated on the need to honour promises and consider employee welfare as a key component of organisational success.

### **10.7 Apolitical government decisions**

Government including other political parties should not use conflict in the platinum mining sector to further their political interests but to have a holistic and national wide approach geared to solving problematic labour issues.

### **10.8 Setting remuneration guidelines in the mining sector**

In order to avoid exploitation of workers by unscrupulous labour or trade unions or brokers, government should facilitate the creation of a guiding remuneration structure (job evaluation system). This should possibly consider the minimum wages, benefits and other packages. This would also promote equity and reduce salary disparities especially between blacks and white.

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