

Labor Unions and Community Unionism: A Comparative Study in China and the United States

Lijie Wang¹, Qian He^{2,*}, Zining Xie³, and Chunhao Ma⁴

¹School of Graduate Studies, Lingnan University, Hong Kong, HKSAR, China

²Department of Finance and Insurance, Lingnan University, Hong Kong, HKSAR, China

³School of Finance, Shandong University of Finance and Economics, Jinan, 250014, China;

⁴School of Management, Shandong Technology and Business University, Yantai, 264010, China

Abstract

Given that labor unions are united organizations of employees aiming to protect employees from unfair labor conditions and strive for their welfares, community unionisms simultaneously offer basic assistance of other part-time employees or unemployed residents in the community. Both organizations endeavor to better social welfares for citizens, and we are interested in the similar and different benefit coverages among labor unions and communities. To study this question, we conduct various interviews of communities and unions in Mainland China to understand different beneficial systems for citizens and compare with the situations in the USA. This paper contributes to illustrate the difference of community unionism and labor unions in social special time (i.e., the COVID-19 pandemic). This paper will be useful for those who are interested in the better protection of social welfares for citizens.

Keywords

Labor unions; Community unionism; Comparative study; COVID-19.

1. Background

Since the rapid development of China's Internet companies from 2016, many enterprises start to enact serious overtime of employees reflecting as "996" working hour system (i.e., work from 9 AM to 9 PM with 6 working days of a week). The welfare and working conditions of workers has been seriously damaged, but the union did not stand up and speak for the workers. The nonfeasance of China's labor unions at this moment damages the workers' rights and interests. In 2019, there was a scheme organized by programmers on GitHub aiming to boycott "996" which shows an awakening of Chinese labor. In contrast, the United States organizes a mature union system. Labor unions in American are non-profit organizations that are organized by voluntary employees aiming to provide support of the union members. American Dispute Resolution Center, providing services including arbitration and regulation aspects, is not a government department, but receive compensation from the government. The mediator system in the US mainly plays an important role in communication between employees and labor unions empower employees more power to protect their interests and rights.

Contemporary social governance emphasizes the participation of social organizations. In China, labor unions are usually organized in companies by employees. Besides, after COVID-19, the participation of residents in the community has become more and more important, and organized unionism of community is a better form to organize citizens and transmit the national policies to residents. Therefore, strong organization and management of labor unions may be helpful to improve the efficiency of society. In the US, labor unions are organized in

companies or government departments and have no function in the community. In sum, American labor unions cannot conduct policy transmission or organize communities.

Labor unions are workers' federations in China. The original intent of a labor union is a social group that is organized spontaneously based on common interests. This common interest group is such as employees working for the same employer, individuals in a certain industry. The main purpose of the establishment of a labor union is to negotiate wages, working hours and working conditions with employers.

The Chinese labor unions are organizations of the working class led by the Communist Party of China where employees voluntarily unite. It is the bridge and link between the party and the employees, an important social pillar of the state power, and a representative of the rights and interests of members and employees. The All-China Federation of Trade Unions is the leading body of the local federations of labor unions and the national organization of industrial labor unions. The All-China Federation of Trade Union is led by the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee. Labor unions in the United States are established by various companies or nationwide labor unions to represent employees of the unit. The United States has some national convention headquarters, and under these national labor unions, there are also different states, different cities, and even the labor union branches of different companies.

According to the "Trade Union Law of the People's Republic of China", the functions of labor unions are:

1. Organize and educate employees to exercise democratic rights in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and laws, play the role of state masters, and maintain socialist state power. in our country;
2. Give full play to the democratic participation and democratic supervision of the labor union in the management of state and social affairs, assist the people's government in its work, and safeguard the socialist state power;
3. The labor union mobilizes and organizes employees to actively participate in economic construction and strive to complete production tasks and work tasks;
4. Educate employees to continuously improve their ideological and moral, technical, professional, scientific and cultural qualities.

Correspondingly, the legal rights of employees to unionize are endorsed by the National Labor Relations Act of 1935 in the US, and the unionized employees can form a union which has collective bargaining power and can directly negotiate with the employer. Once a union is selected as the exclusive bargaining representative to represent the whole group of employees, the selected union could negotiate with the employer representing all employees. The *Abood* case ruled in 1977 legitimizes collective bargaining agreement with an agency-shop clause and entitles the compulsory union fees that are deducted from the salaries of employees. However, the *Janus* ruling in 2018 challenges that the *Abood* case violate the First Amendment when money is taken from nonconsenting employees for a public sector union. The supreme court of the US declares that the *Abood* case is an anomaly for the First Amendment and the compulsory union fees from nonconsenting public sector employees violate the First Amendment. Therefore, the strength of American labor unions is constantly being weakened.

This paper aims to discuss the role of China's community unionisms in social governance, and compare it to labor unions in the United States. This article highlights the unique role of community unionisms in Chinese communities among China and US.

2. Significance and Problematics

2.1. Significance of the Study

The status of China's labor unions is mainly reflected in three aspects: First, as a mass organization of the working class led by the Communist Party of China where workers voluntarily unite, labor unions are the bridge and link between the party and the masses of workers. Through the labor unions, the party conveys the party's line, principles, and policies to the masses of workers. At the same time, the opinions, suggestions, and demands of the workers are fed back through the labor union and serve as the basis for the party's decision-making. The role of labor unions as bridges and bonds is irreplaceable by any other organization or group. Second, labor unions are close collaborators of the government and an important social pillar of the employees' power. They have the right to participate in the management of provincial affairs, economic and cultural undertakings, and social affairs. The labor union assists the government in its work and gives full play to the democratic participation and social supervision of the labor union in the process of the government's exercise of provincial administrative power, so as to maintain the socialist state power of the people's democratic dictatorship led by the working class and based on the alliance of workers and peasants. Third, the labor union is the representative and defender of the interests of its members and employees, and it is an indispensable party in coordinating labor relations. It achieves the purpose of coordinating labor relations, safeguarding labor rights and democratic rights of employees by conducting equal consultations and signing collective contracts on behalf of employees and enterprises, and presiding over the daily work of the employees' congress. With the Chinese market continuously improve the protection of labor relations, labor unions in coordinating labor relations, safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of workers in the role will become increasingly apparent, will be more prominent position, becoming promote reform, promote development and maintain stability of a support an important force.

2.2. Statement of the Problem

The research question we studied is that whether labor unions in the community can play a similar role to NGOs, and what is the different between community unionisms and labor unions. The legal basis for this role is based on the constitution's "labor unions should complete the tasks assigned to them by other parties and the state."

The role of labor unions is obvious in China. Its significance in state-owned enterprises is to organize employees to participate in activities and enrich their daily lives. The traditional mode of corporate management is in a Chinese-style compound. Under this model, the role of labor unions is mainly to represent the rights and interests of workers.

hypothesis 1. Labor unions still have organizational effects and serve the society.

hypothesis 2. Community unionisms can ensure the smooth operation of the community and improve the efficiency of society.

This research will investigate the current forms and methods of the labor union and community unionism through various methods and judge that whether them still have strong social organization power. Through investigations, it is found that labor unions and community unionisms are well organized, especially in the compound of government agencies. Residents there are generally union members, so they can better organize union activities.

2.3. Scopes and Limitations

This study would be limited to several labor unions and communities around recent 5 years. The subject would be limited to those objects. The subjects would also be limited to the condition of those worker's life and government's policy. The section headings are in boldface

capital and lowercase letters. Second level headings are typed as part of the succeeding paragraph (like the subsection heading of this paragraph). All manuscripts must be in English, also the table and figure texts, otherwise we cannot publish your paper. Please keep a second copy of your manuscript in your office. When receiving the paper, we assume that the corresponding authors grant us the copyright to use the paper for the book or journal in question. When receiving the paper, we assume that the corresponding authors grant us the copyright to use the paper for the book or journal in question. When receiving the paper, we assume that the corresponding authors grant us the copyright to use.

3. Methods

3.1. Research Design

We use questionnaire and interviews to understand the function of community unionisms in Chinese society. In order to reach a conclusion of universality, we selected the labor unions in several cities in northern, southern, central and western China to conduct interviews. Because different regions and different unions are relatively heterogeneous, we used open interviews to interview community unionisms in different regions. In the interview, the central idea we asked was to understand the main work content, funding sources, organizational structure, and management mode of the labor union. Because we are now in a special period, the COVID- 19 pandemic is sweeping the world, so we can also understand what kind of contribution community unionisms and labor unions have made in this special period.

3.2. Instruments

The questionnaire and instructed interview are considered as the main instrument to be used in study. This article uses comparative research methods, through qualitative analysis and interviews, to further sort out the role of China's community unionisms and labor unions, to judge whether labor unions have produced their social value, and to evaluate the role of community unionism in society. In this part, we will introduce the research methods of this article in detail.

3.3. Respondents

We randomly interviewed some union members. Some union members said that the role of the labor union is to distribute condolences during holidays.

"We will receive zongzi during the Dragon Boat Festival, moon cakes during the Mid-Autumn Festival, and welfare payments or gift cards during the Spring Festival. In short, our union will give us some small surprises every three months." (Union member, occupation is Teachers in public schools)

The union members also stated that their workload is also much greater due to the nature of teachers in public schools.

"Although our labor union will not force a lot of work, but it will also let us do a lot of things outside of work. Some things are unpaid, but we all know that this is a special job during a special period, such as urging parents to do nucleic acid testing. playing COVID-19 vaccine, statistics that help stroke epidemiological investigation. in fact, a lot of work do not belong to us, but we have to do."

"But there are also many interesting things. For example, our union organized our chorus. Although it delayed our time for a few days and nights, it gave us performance costumes as condolences. This gift is not cheap."

It can be seen that the organizational form of Chinese labor unions is similar to that of employee clubs. Companies and employees are not antagonistic. Even in some state-owned enterprises, labor unions are an important way for enterprises to enrich their employees' life.

"Our unit sends gifts from the labor union every month. There is a New Year in January, the Lantern Festival and the Spring Festival in February, and the Qingming Festival in March will take us a half-day holiday for climbing or going to the Martyrs Cemetery. During the Labor Day holiday in April and May, we will organize a tour. Or give out gifts. Reading cards will be issued on Children's Day in June, Zongzi will also be given out on Dragon Boat Festival. In July and August, the Army and Party Building Day will take us to visit and travel. Mooncakes will be given out on Mid-Autumn Festival in September, and maybe in November and December. busy, but also to prepare the annual activities of our year-end, although many gifts are poor products, and some we will not necessarily like it, but all in union not let you down." (employees of state enterprises)

It can be seen that labor unions can bring tangible benefits to employees. And we also found cases of labor unions participating in social work.

"At the request of the epidemic prevention department, after coordination with the labor union and the company, we learned that the labor union needs us to protect our community, so we went. To be honest, although I didn't go to work, I felt very tired during those few days. Because we have to help many communities. Epidemic prevention work." (employees of private enterprises)

Other union members said that after participating in the union, many social responsibility tasks originally assigned by the enterprise were assigned by the union.

There are also managers of labor union members who stated that their labor union is an important part of the enterprise and should bear its social responsibilities. Labor unions also have the responsibility and obligation to work for their social responsibilities.

4. Results and Discussions

Through preliminary data collection, we found that the Chinese society is a highly collectivist and centralized society with a very strong collectivism color. The existence of labor unions is another embodiment of collective or enterprise control over employees. However, China's labor unions also have welfare funds from enterprises. The role of labor unions in China's poverty alleviation is very obvious. Through labor union procurement, Chinese companies can target and assist some industries in the western region for development and upgrading. The effect of this activity is very strong. Labor unions can also effectively bring benefits to residents. In the past, when most of the union members lived in the unit compound, the union was very organized. The labor union can organize residents to participate in the patriotic health campaign, and can also participate in the work of welcoming major events. The union is a good starting point for the residents. By labor unions, the state can penetrate into every community residents' life.

1. In antipoverty movement

2020 is a very important year for China. In this year, China has achieved an all-round well-off and at the same time, Chinese society has also achieved complete freedom from absolute poverty. In working out of poverty, we have seen many great workers from these people come from labor unions. For example, Shandong is responsible for poverty alleviation in certain areas of western China. The company we interviewed is mainly engaged in expressway business. It is responsible for the development of some western regions, and it is also responsible for some poverty alleviation work in Shandong Province. First, the poverty area in Shandong Province is rich in flowers, and the company has adopted some tie-in sales methods for flower sales of the poverty area, selling its flowers to the company's employees. In addition, the employee's benefits and prize purchases are also purchased from the poverty area. Second, the company was ordered to send the 50 direct leaders to towns and villages, and these leaders are responsible for liaison and coordination of the procurement construction. At the same time, due

to the well-organized management of the labor union, the overall program is under the control. This proves the role of labor unions in poverty alleviation.

2. In educational affairs

The Chinese labor union provides employees with many training opportunities, ranging from first aid to professional training and continuing education. During COVID-19 pandemic, labor unions provide training opportunities of employees including the disinfection measures, precautions and guidance of home quarantine. Some well-funded unions even subsidize their members to attend online colleges and universities. In some matters, China's labor unions will also provide necessary assistance to their members to improve the safety of their work. Although we can see that China's labor unions can do these things, their actions are guided by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions.

Through our interviews, we found that in China, community unionisms have also indeed achieved their social work in epidemic prevention and control.

1. In social special time

At the time of COVID-19, when an epidemic breaks out in a certain place in China, the following tasks are usually carried out:

- a) The government organizes police and community workers to lock down a certain area for epidemiological investigation;
- b) Conduct COVID-19 nucleic acid inspections in the locked areas, commonly known as general COVID-19 filter in China;
- c) Conduct the lockdown areas Material supply;
- d) Guarantee the social order in the blocked area, investigate the whereabouts of patients and check the health of the residents in the area;
- e) Lift the blockade;
- f) Popularize vaccines.

In these steps, each step requires manpower, and normal residents cannot participate in the work. The task of organizing volunteer workers and communicating work arrangements falls on the hands of the community unions.

The government has paid a lot in organizing such major social events. Its community unions are responsible for liaising with residents to participate in the closed management of the community.

2. In social daily management

The community union has undertaken the job of promoting the COVID-19 vaccine to employees. The COVID-19 vaccine is difficult in the initial stage of promotion, and when an epidemic occurs in a certain place, the opportunity to obtain a nucleic acid test is also extremely rare. But community unions often have access to testing opportunities and vaccine opportunities allocated by the state. By supplying vaccines and testing for COVID-19, community union members can be better protected. At the same time, the community union has also undertaken the tasks to monitor and manage fertility policies of the government. These are the management work of the daily social affairs of the Chinese community unions.

3. In normal times

At other times, the social management work of the community union is not very visible. China is currently undergoing a period of social transformation from subsistence to middle-income levels. Urban communities are the epitome of society, and they are at the most basic level of the urban organizational system. They are the undertaking point of various tasks, the concentrated reflection points of social conditions and public opinion, the guarantee point of social stability, and they are on the front line of serving the masses.

As the most important social and political organization in China and an important social pillar of the state power, the community union is the bridge and link between the party and the masses of workers. The Community union's participation in urban community management a) is meaningful to guide national urban community management practice of socialism; b) has important practical significance for innovative urban community management under the theory of the socialist market economy; c) is an important part of the social management system of the planned economy to build a society with Chinese characteristics.

Since the reform and development, the development of urban community construction and service in China has gone through three different stages. The first stage, the reform and opening up to the end of the 1980s, continued to emphasize community service; the second stage, from the end of the 1980s to the beginning of this century, community service relied on the construction of community organizations; the third stage, From the beginning of this century to the present, in the stage of strengthening social management, community services based on the construction of community organizations and social management have become more and more perfect.

Recently, there are the following problems in urban community management in China: first, the functional authority of community service management is not clear; Secondly, the legalization of community management and service is insufficient. Third, the professional quality of community practitioners needs to be improved; Fourth, community services are facing a shortage of funds; Fifth, the integration of community resources is ineffective. The participation of community unions in urban community management is an important means for the Chinese Communist Party to move down its ruling center, which reflects the development trend of diversified community service subjects and is the inevitable requirement for the expansion of community unions' functions in the social transformation. With the development of community unions in China and the advancement of urbanization, community unions' participation in urban community management has made remarkable achievements.

However, there are still some problems in the construction of urban community trade unions, such as insufficient coverage, unadjusted functions, backward and rigid working methods, and mere formality. The reasons are not only the lack of understanding, but also the lag of organizational construction and the outdated way of work.

Our study also investigates the actual situation of labor unions' participation in urban community management and analyzes the different and similar attributes of labor unions and community unions in the combination of universality and particularity of the method and the Angle of view. We also promote some suggestions for the development of trade unions to participate in the urban community construction. From the perspectives of the social institution and system, a) the government should establish the source of trade unions to participate in the construction of urban community management system; b) labor unions should seek countermeasures for job promotion; c) labor unions should establish and improve the working mechanism for members to serve urban communities voluntarily.

In the United States, however, trade unions primarily serve full-time employees, and their job is to protect their employees' interests in the workplace. In the United States, union members earn much more than non-union members. Over the four years from 2004 to 2007, unionized workers on average earned 11.3 percent more than non-unionized workers in the same position, meaning that, all else being equal, a unionized American worker would have earned 11.3 percent more than a non-unionized American worker (\$2.26 more per hour in 2008 dollars). In addition, union coverage has been declining for decades. In 1983, 23.3 percent of American workers were either union members or union representatives at their workplace. By 2008, that had fallen to 13.7 percent. As productivity rose, wage growth for American workers lagged during that time. Workers helped the economy grow by increasing productivity, but they only received a small fraction of the new wealth they helped create.

In sum, through our research, we find that community unions in Chinese communities serve a wider audience, and the work is more detailed, which is conducive to the transmission of social policies and can improve the work efficiency of the entire society. While the sole labor union system of American only serves the employees.

5. Conclusion

We concluded that unions are necessary, regardless of whether the union is a community union used to organize self-employed individuals in the community or a labor union organized by employees. The labor union is an important organization to a country and society to protect employees. However, with the emerging of self-employee, which is very popular now, the functions of labor unions have been limited. If labor unions want to continue to develop, they need to update their organizations to adapt to a more complicated social condition. And Chinese labor unions need to take steps to encourage employees to participate in labor unions and carry out labor union reforms. From this study, we find that the community unionisms play a better job than labor unions in social affairs especially in the special time (e.g., in this case, COVID-19 pandemic). In sum, the combination of these two can improve the unions' role in the society.

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