

Can Occupational Predation Buy Labour Quiescence?

The Case of the Public Sector in Zimbabwe

Langtone Maunganidze¹

¹ Department of Sociology, University of Botswana, Gaborone, Botswana

Corresponding: Langtone Maunganidze, Department of Sociology, University of Botswana, P Bag 00705, Gaborone. Botswana. Tel: 267-75-577-199. E-mail: langtone.maunganidze@mopipi.ub.bw

Received: August 24, 2013

Accepted: September 10, 2013

Online Published: October 29, 2013

doi:10.5430/bmr.v2n4p1

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5430/bmr.v2n4p1>

Abstract

Occupational crimes and industrial conflict remain one of the most complex challenges confronting both industrial relations scholars and practitioners. Buoyed by postmodern thinking the paper examines the extent to which the dynamics and patterns of occupational predation is wickedly traded-off for labour quiescence. It focuses specifically on a selected Zimbabwean public sector organisation that is responsible for the administration and monitoring of revenue collection for the State. The paper advances that although some organisational settings are more structurally 'criminogenic' and providing more opportunities for occupational crimes than others, this one is a 'wicked' case in which occupational crimes have been institutionalized and systemically transformed into a form of calculative or 'fractional' collective bargaining. Both primary and secondary data is collected from two of the organisation's largest stations using a qualitative research approach and analysed by a combination of thematic and domain data analysis techniques. Twenty participants from each station were selected by both simple stratified and purposive availability sampling designs. It is observed that occupational crimes in this organisation have taken a predatory character and invariably acting as a buffer inventory that insulates the organisation against unfavourable macro-economic environment. While alternative conventional theories of worker mobilization or resistance would have viewed this situation as a sufficient condition and opportunity for employees to engage in collective action, evidence suggests otherwise. The paper concludes that predation in the public sector levels the ground in the management of industrial conflict as it is traded-off for industrial peace or labour quiescence.

Keywords: Criminogenic, Industrial conflict, Labour quiescence, Occupational crime, Predation

1. Introduction and Background

Crimes that are committed by employees in the course of performing their official duties at the expense of their organisations remain one of the most complex challenges confronting industrial relations scholars and practitioners. In this article, occupational crimes such as taking bribes or 'fiddling' (defrauding or cheating) unsuspecting clients, apply to deliberate acts or activities by employees which violates rules or procedures for personal financial gain in the context of performing one's job (Friedrichs, 2010; Saksena, 2012). What makes the phenomenon a striking case for empirical investigation is how in its predatory form it continues to influence the dynamics and patterns of contemporary employee relations across sectors in general and the public sector in particular. This article is based on a Zimbabwean autonomous or quasi-government department that is responsible for the administration and monitoring of revenue collection in the form of taxes and customs duties and facilitation of international trade. The article examines the association between occupational predation and the reduced labour militancy or strike-proneness, here in referred to as 'labour quiescence' (Thompson & Ackroyd, 1995; Shalev, 2002). It addresses the question; *can occupational crimes buy industrial peace or reduced worker militancy?*

Although studies on employee or occupational crimes are not new (Box, 1983; Ditton, 1977; Punch, 1996; Mars, 1982; 1996; 2001; Friedrichs, 2002; 2010; Tucker, 2001), specific and systematic evidence-based analysis on its interface with industrial relations particularly focusing on public sector in developing or emerging economies in an African setting such as Zimbabwe have been scarce. Given that strikes provide the most dramatic index of industrial discontent (Blyton & Turnbull, 2004), the decline in labour militancy or 'labour quiescence' (Shalev, 2002)), across the public sector in Zimbabwe evokes a heightened interest for scientific investigation. Despite the immense impact

of employee crime on national economy at large in terms of revenue losses, poor public service delivery and organisation's productivity in particular, there has been very little systematic analysis on the phenomenon's central role in the construction and deconstruction of industrial relations realities. Occupational crimes and industrial conflict are more often dealt with at the publicistic level with a few researchers looking at the issue through the prism of management science. One of the most striking dimensions of this phenomenon particularly in Zimbabwe has been its systemic cannibalization or transformation into a form of 'collective bargaining'. Crimes suppress the expression of overt dissatisfaction with the formal reward system normally expressed in form of strikes in these organisations.

This paper advances the argument that the criminogenic nature of public sector organisations in Zimbabwe poses great dilemma for the mobilization and unionisation of employees albeit the prevailing unfavourable macro-economic environment. There is co-evolution of corruption within organisations (micro) and the external environment (macro). Workplace crimes are endogenous and deeply entrenched onto the organisational configurations and processes making them systemic and planned rather than accidental. Although there are external shocks and exogenous sources to these, both the state (owner and sole-shareholder) and company executives (principal agents), cannot be completely absolved of complicity. Employee crime in these criminogenic institutions has been reduced to an alternative form of collective bargaining. Predation is a 'wicked' problem which neither party is fully committed to solve as the 'covert' benefits accrued from it tend to outstrip the costs of 'overt' industrial conflict. As a form of bargaining, there is some complicity in its perpetuation in pursuit of parochial interests. Without opportunities available for such crimes workers would naturally express their anger through withdrawal of labour, go slows or even mass stay-aways. The Zimbabwean public sector environment operating under acute economic contraction and uncertainty has made any legitimate opportunities for achievement or success very limited. When such environmental uncertainties increase so the strain towards corporate criminal activity will increase (Box, 1983).

1.1 Overview of Predation in the Zimbabwean Public Sector

On attaining political independence in 1980, the new state in Zimbabwe inherited a civil service that was deeply divided along racist lines and with fragmented procedures to monitor efficiency and effectiveness. Drawing lessons from experiences of other post-colonial African countries where corruption was already endemic across civil service structures, the ruling political party, ZANUPF, instituted the 1985 Leadership Code (an institutional framework to prevent capital accumulation by senior party and government officials at the expense of the poor majority). However, the Leadership Code did not have a supporting legal basis apart from ad hoc institutions or task forces set up by either the Executive or the party. It was against this background that the first Anti-graft/corruption Commission led by a Supreme Court judge, Justice Sandura, was set up and whose 1989 report unearthed numerous predatory activities by some cabinet ministers in the distribution of motor vehicles at one of the state owned vehicle assembling plants, the Willovale Motor Industries (WMI) in Harare, that was code named the Willogate scandal (Zimbabwe Govt., 1989). This was only the beginning of the epidemic' as the situation deteriorated with the coming of ESAP- induced retrenchments, unemployment and shortages of basic commodities in the 1990s.

By the turn of the new millennium the level of predation across the civil service had reached unprecedented levels punctuated by bloated civil service structure that was manned by a deeply disenchanted workforce, an equally corrupt and predatory law enforcement system. The deterioration in basic service delivery across the civil service sectors and the absence of integrity within many public institutions summarised the extent of fragility in Zimbabwe (Sarkar, 2008). The economic and political meltdown characterized by hyperinflation levels, with year-on-year inflation exceeding 1 000 per cent in 2006 and to an estimated over 2 million per cent in July 2008 (IMF, 2010), led to massive brain drain and employee disengagement as workers left for the neighbouring countries and beyond, as 'survival' migrants or 'economic refugees' (Betts, 2010; Maphosa, 2011). The increasing cost of living which was worsened by acute shortage of basic commodities and institutionalized parallel or black market or shadow trading of foreign currencies saw the economy collapsing and the country sliding into a moral paralysis in which 'graft' or predation became a standard operating procedure. Tax evasion on imported goods worsened and 'greasing' of public servants for scarce products such as passports or drivers licences became rampant. Systemic corruption has contributed to the deepening fragility of state institutions particularly those responsible for law enforcement and controls. Such a context is a very fertile ground for all sorts of criminal activities. State organs such as the central bank, vehicle inspectors, police or taxes and customs became too fragile to restrain any predation. Ports of entry such as BeitBridge and Harare Airport were effectively reduced to harvesting rods. The more fragile the institutions become the more the opportunities available for institutionalized corruption (Cartier-Bresson, 2004).

1.2 The Study Area

The Revenue Authority was established on 19 January 2001 as a successor organisation to the then government Departments of Taxes and Customs and Excise following the promulgation of its enabling Act on February 11, 2000. The new organisation effectively started operating on September 1, 2001 with a combined staff compliment of nearly 1700 (www.zimra.co.zw). Its formation was intended to improve efficiency in the administration and monitoring of revenue collection. The two departments had been historically bedevilled by endemic corruption and high labour turnover. Prior to this transformation the departments enjoyed a relatively peaceful industrial relations climate but at the same time perceived by both authorities and the public as pilfering-prone and manned by 'predators'. Apart from corruption, one of the most recalcitrant challenges was that of high expert labour turnover particularly of University graduates leaving the former departments to join more lucrative and career rewarding accounting and auditing firms in the private sector.

One of the most celebrated changes characteristic of this new organisation was the weaning of staff conditions of service from the highly bureaucratic and underpaying Public Service Commission (the then institution responsible for the management of the civil service in Zimbabwe). This was hoped to possibly improve efficiency and thus restrain corruption. However as with all organisational changes, events leading to the formation of the new institution were anxiety-inducing and intractably conflict-ridden, characterised by mistrust and trading of accusations between management and employees. There was a general emergence of a 'blame culture', and decline in morale and loyalty (Blyton & Turnbull, 2004). The newly appointed CEO who was a former Tax expert was committed to steer the new 'ship' sternly and equally unapologetic regarding the fight against corruption. Although the organisation has enjoyed relative industrial peace over the years, corruption has remained one of its main challenges. Corruption related suspensions and dismissals at both managerial and rank and file levels continued to haunt the organisation for many years. For example, since 2001 only four 'strikes' were experienced (see table. 2) and according to official reports, the organisation has also constantly exceeded its performance targets by attaining a record variance of 1020% in 2008 (notwithstanding the prevailing hyperinflation)(see table.1)(www.zimra.co.zw). The prevailing labour quiescence was inconsistent with the unfavourable macroeconomic environment that prevailed. Seemingly less criminogenic institutions such as hospitals and schools nearly closed during the same period as staff did not report for duty or engaged in informal cross border trading or left for greener pastures.

Table 1. Revenue collections against target (2001-2011)

Year	Target	Collections	% Collections	Variance
2001	ZWD 132,205,200.00	ZWD 131,095,186.000	99%	-1%
2002	ZWD 240,867,703	ZWD 286,080,498	119%	19%
2003	ZWD 1,147,150,430	ZWD 1,340,263,640	117%	17%
2004	ZWD 7,227,342,110	ZWD 7,870,044,779	109%	9%
2005	ZWD 24,190,773,325	ZWD 32,071,228,846	133%	33%
2006	ZWD 317,590,000,000	ZWD 406,677,663,936	128%	28%
2007	ZWD 30,026,802,809,379	ZWD 89,051,653,471,682	297%	197%
2008	ZWD 1,291,792,326,598,340,000	ZWD 14,465,620,196,460,000,000.000	1120%	1020%
2009	USD 1,051,489,093	USD 988,478,184	94%	-6%
2010	USD 1,919,333,105	USD 2,238,240,231.58	115%	15%
2011	USD 2.5 billion	USD 2.8 billion	111%	11%

Source: www.zimra.co.zw; © Copyright 2013 Zimbabwe Revenue Authority.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Co-evolution of predation

Co-evolution involves simultaneous evolution of organizations (or unit of evolution) and their environments-comprising other organizations and entities- where the former influences the latter as well as vice versa in a continual and interactive process (Lewin & Volberda, 1999). The macro and micro aspects of co-evolution coexist and differ in the manner and speed at which they occur, what Madhok and Liu (2006) termed 'speed differential'. Co-evolutionary theory discusses the confluence of forces from the environment and the capacity of management to shape the environment. Changes that happen at the external environment have an impact on micro environment operations and activities. Porter (2006) indicated that co-evolution's fundamental premise is that

entities or organizations evolve in relation to their environments while at the same time these environments evolve in relation to them. This argument is also supported by Burton, Ericksen, Hakonsson and Snow (2006) who assert that that high performance results from a strong external fit between the firm's overall strategy and its environment, and a tight internal fit among capabilities, structures, processes and management. A change in the political and economic landscape has a bearing on the degree and spread of predation within public service. The effects of changes from the macro environment whether positive or negative affect the way particular organisations manage employee crimes. The prevailing trends in employee crimes are driven by the simultaneous interplay of external macro-co evolution and internal micro co-evolution, and the resultant influence on their internal capabilities. Each organisational strategy against corruption is sustained by its ability to effectively connect to internal capabilities and competencies (Lewin & Volberda, 1999). During the economic meltdown there was tension between the macro and micro aspects of co-evolution which negatively impacted on employee engagement. Predation suppressed the expression of overt dissatisfaction with the formal reward system normally expressed in form of strikes in these organisations and has invariably become a buffer inventory that insulates such organisations against unfavourable macro-economic environment. Opportunities for predation or any kind of fiddling has made work less alienating.

'Organisations may create climates where collective deviance is an acceptable answer to perceived institutional dilemmas, and where organisational culture, resources and facilities are intrinsic to the development of the deviance' (Punch, 1996: 57). When climate is dissatisfying it leads to a decrease in the workforce productivity, commitment and increase the rate of optimal discontinuation of the job. Although employees in ZIMRA generally do not positively rate their organisational climate they rarely manifest their dissatisfaction through traditional forms such as absenteeism or 'work stoppages'. Any opportunity for corruption creates reduced militancy. For the 'vulture,' being away from work would reduce the chances of 'informal reward' or 'invisible wages'. These 'informal rewards' or 'invisible wages' form part of the deep structure of the organisation. They take the form of covert institutions which authorities are not completely unaware of but perhaps only treated as a way of avoiding running across their grain. For the management, maintaining a strategic 'let loose' posture becomes more favourable than direct confrontation.

The opportunities and the pressures for people to fiddle and their manifestations vary widely. Mars (1982) defined fiddle-proneness as 'any work context where a propensity exists for a job to offer regular material rewards that are excluded from formal accounts or which are included under ambiguous or deceptive headings'. In this organisation this also covers jobs where there is a built-in propensity to avoid or evade taxes-especially where these activities are colluded in by the management. Fiddles arise because workers creatively exploit underlying structural differences of knowledge, control, power and ability. Fiddling may be classified according to Mars's grid (donkeys, hawks, wolves and vultures) (Mars, 1982: 29). For each category, fiddling or pilferage is organised in almost the same way as it is needed to organise legitimate work. In this organisation all the groups can be identified but the vultures and wolves are most pronounced. Mars' typology is intended to do more than merely point to the relation between the nature of occupations and their fiddles. Execution of most of the tasks demands a combination of the 'vulture', 'donkey', 'hawk' and 'wolf pack'. Fiddles prevail and all as a consequence of the nature of work rules and processes. For example, when management introduced teams and multi-skilling as a possible way of enhancing efficient auditing and arresting corruption, 'donkeys' and 'hawks' which are naturally based on weak group involvement and less professionalized were replaced by highly skilled 'vultures' and 'wolves'. The implication is that one becomes a vulture not only by choice but by the structural conditioning of work organisation. For example, auditing procedures such as individual or company tax audit assessment become part of 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1994) but mediated by those processes which shape workers' definitions of the situation. Definitions of reality are themselves socially generated and sustained, and the ability of individuals to achieve their goals is constrained by the objective characteristics of their situation. Jobs in this organisation offer considerable autonomy and freedom to transact but also subject to an overarching bureaucratic control that treats workers collectively, employs them in units and thereby encourages group collectiveness. For example, revenue specialists require the support of registry clerks, cashiers or security guards to exploit their terrain but when they find their opportunity they can be on their own. As long as predation is supported by the system there is no problem. The problem arises when there is technological or structural change that disturbs the fiddling earnings of all members of a group. There is likely to be a collective reaction which focuses on some general acceptable cause, and which avoid direct reference to the real cause of the trouble.

Most employees are *learning the ropes on the job* through their interaction with group members. Work group's norms regulate limitations on the degree, timing and manner of fiddling (Mars, 2001). Revenue trainees or recruits enter some kind of 'apprenticeship' which allows one to accept the practice which governs how much is 'harvested' without overtly offending the whole system. Following Mars' thesis two stages of learning are discernible: learning about the job (and more important, certain truths about the job including fiddling patterns as both distant and

participant observers) and learning to hold down and progress in the job. Criminogenic public sector jobs such as tax assessment, customs and law enforcement allow predation to thrive. As one key informant and experienced revenue specialist indicated: *'In our work particularly, one does not necessarily need to have criminal predispositions but the job itself permits one to 'steal'. You just need to be part of the work. It's the job that steals'*. The new entrant should first of all understand the job's formal requirements and be an 'expert' in the job for him to successfully fiddle without being easily detected. The entrant must also cope with the psychological requirement of recognising that fiddles are acceptable to him personally. There is self-motivation to acclimatise fast enough given the expected accompanying reward. From outside the job, fiddles appear as excrescences, not integral to the job at all. At first the recruit sees corruption as something other people do, and something he might personally avoid.

2.2 Social Construction of predation

According to Henry and Milovanovic (1991), constitutive criminology drawing on postmodern thought emphasizes the fundamental instability of meaning in which realities are constantly deconstructed and reconstructed. People construct the 'truth' and 'reality' of the world around them through language (or 'discourse'); which itself reflects widely assumptions, values and ideas (Abbott, 2006; Henry, 2009). Although assumptions and values about truth and reality are problematic, the way fiddling is executed and sustained by both individuals and systems produce a relative pattern that makes it analyzable. Employees who engage in them see them differently, describing them as 'salvaging', 'fringing', 'borrowing', 'fiddling' and 'levelling' (Horning 1983; Mars 2006). The construction of certain types of discourses ('craft', 'harvest' 'windfall', 'lining', 'creaming', 'greasing', 'perching', 'panning', 'perks', ...) built into the language of occupational crime draws workers, managers and publics into a set of meanings and understandings that serve to justify the practice as part of organisational culture. In this article, 'fiddling' is the most frequently used to describe the type of predation that prevailed. Since the behaviour of employees is relative and often contradictory in response to structural conditioning exerted onto them by the organisation of work-process, rules, and opportunities, analysis of data dwell on how the individuals established meanings through engaging in language on the job, and how this in turn shapes their behaviours. Station middle-level managers and supervisors are often labelled, 'cats', 'scanners', 'prefects', 'gatekeepers'. Of interest is how employees have coined the organisation's Harare based Head Office as 'Pentagon' (named after the US centre of military authority and execution). Meanings are derived from the surrounding culture, symbols, rituals and language of 'work'. Reality does not exist for us in a ready-made form; we 'construct it' (Ravn, 1991). The process of reality construction takes place in the 'fiddler's ongoing routines of interaction and social exchange. Meanings are constructed and reconstructed by actors in the course of social interactions (Burr, 1995).

Occupational crime may be seen by both managers and workers as an acceptable or even optimal solution, not a problem to be solved (Menkhaus, 2010). Under criminogenic structures such as those experienced in this case, employee pilferage, bribery or any form of predation will always occur no matter the company's preparedness. These are 'wicked' problems which cannot be solved but probably 'tamed' and will require some form of 'post-normal' thinking/planning (McCarthy 2000). Wicked problems require non-traditional processes because they often have no precedents. In a world of complex and shadowy possibilities organizations do not know if their strategies are appropriate or what consequences might be (Camillus, 2008). Managers and even law enforcement agencies have little control over the nature of predation (Orlikowski, 2002). The construction of managers as controlling and commanding is false ideology. They are not in control of anything. As Fischer 111 (2001) puts it; the managers command little and control nothing. What perhaps they can control is the capacity to present these 'crimes' as manageable and controllable. There is no evidence indicating that both managers and employees are fully committed to solving the problem permanently.

3. Methodology

The data was collected from two purposely selected workstations; one inland station, (Harare) and one border post (Beit-Bridge), using a qualitative research approach and analysed by a combination of thematic and domain data analysis techniques. The study used both primary and secondary sources of data. Although the study was predominantly exploratory, findings are occasionally triangulated with some statistics.

Preliminary data was collected randomly and with no thematic orientation, from various stations in the country beginning as early as 2002. Systematic collection and analysis only began more than five years later culminating in scholarly preparation for this article. Effectively the study can easily fall into the longitudinal mode as the period covered includes more than one trajectory; 2002-2006 (relatively economic stability punctuated by marginal decline); 2007-2009 (economic meltdown and deterioration/collapse of local currency) and post-2009 (modest restoration of economic stability-dollarization). Further to this, the approach provided information from a number of sources

(unstructured interviews, observations, informants' lived experiences and desk review of official documents) over an extended period of time thus allowing for the ease comprehension of complex social processes and meanings. At least twenty respondents from each station were selected by both simple stratified and purposive availability sampling designs. The study allowed some flexibility in the choice of respondents and relied heavily on the availability of the various managers and workers committee members as representatives of their respective constituents and as individual employees in their own right. Conclusions are also drawn from lived experiences of key informants that include both employee representatives and managers. To ensure validity and objectivity interviewees were selected from different sections and a cross-section of career levels. Given the complexity of the phenomenon, this approach encouraged and facilitated theoretical and conceptual development which is critical for generalizations, that is, linking findings from this sample to the general level of theory.

The methodology was however not without limitations. For example, when reflecting on the past events or lived experiences ordinary employees or members of workers committee tended to give information which was 'slanted or false' particularly on the issue of why the organisation was not strike-prone despite the relatively low salaries and management style that was not so well rated relative to other institutions. In coming up with this article, an ethically informed approach to issues surrounding the negotiation of access and recording of data was adopted. Research ethics are fundamentally negotiable and cannot be dealt with and dispatched at the start of a research project (Collins, 2002; Bacon, 2002). No researcher can demand access to an institution, community, or materials (Bongo, 2002). One cannot just bring himself to study people without their consent (Peil, 1982). Although the author gained entry into the space of research subjects as an admitted researcher, there was still the need to negotiate for full entry. Admittedly, in some instances 'covert' observations were unavoidable while protecting the privacy and confidentiality of participants.

4. Discussion

4.1 Worker Mobilization

Industrial conflict may occur at distributive, structural and human relations levels and can be cooperative or competitive. At the distributive level, which is the main focus of this inquiry, conflict arises from questions regarding rewards particularly when workers acquire a sense of injustice or grievance or 'inequity' necessary to motivate collective action (Sale, 2003; Kelly, 1998). Inequity is one of the central factors helping to explain employee deviance or theft. When experiencing injustice, workers respond by slowing down, striking, or filing grievances. They also engage in deviant and criminal behaviour. However this sense of injustice should coalesce into a social group with collective interests. Individuals blame the organisation and making it target for collective organisation and action. Individuals considering themselves short-changed on 'wage-effort' bargain would tend to remedy their perceived inequity by other means, including 'fiddles' (Mars, 2001). They are concerned with restoring balance or equilibrium often through collective bargaining.

But how does predation in the form of fiddling or bribery induces or buys-off reduced worker militancy or quiescence? Fiddling makes work less alienating and the fact that it is systemic or institutionalized renders both managers and workers in some kind of calculative or 'fractional' bargaining. The 'invisible' wages (Mars, 2001) tend to supplement the formal pay at the end of the month and reduce overt manifestation of conflict. Low rates of pay make fiddling activities justifiable to ensure a 'fair day's pay'. The social context of the workplace contributes to deviance and often creates it. Deviance satisfies undeclared and covert interests, often including those of management. There is an exchange of industrial peace for managerially tolerated levels of deviance. 'Perks' or 'fiddles' are often widely tolerated in the workplace subcultures, and can also be tacitly tolerated by management, who may consider that to take action might disrupt the fine balance of industrial relations (Friedrichs, 2010). Deviance also produces benefits to employers. It can bind members of teams, offer informal incentives where formal systems are too rigid, making boring jobs more interesting and buying off labour dissatisfaction. A case in point is the issue of revenue officers who hold university degrees but were assigned nearly rudimentary and tedious errands such as basic document check, clearing passengers or travellers or controlling traffic or manning entrance 'booms' or roadblocks. Such jobs in the absence opportunities for predation would have been too mundane, monotonous and little fulfilling for the highly educated graduates who include holders of post graduate qualifications. At the time of the study, more than 70% of revenue officers were holders of University diplomas and degrees after the organisation introduced graduate trainee programmes a few years ago and initiated a Fiscal Studies degree programme in association with a local university targeting non-graduate senior technical staff. For example, in 2002, of the 15 members of the national executive of the workers committee only four were not holders of post-secondary qualifications.

Workers are resourceful and flexible, and the strategies they follow to get loose are sensible responses to the structurally exerted contingencies. Corruption allows many such workers to control their jobs rather than being controlled by them. Covert institutions are counter-institutions that mirror the more formalized ways the jobs are organised and restore to the worker the autonomy of which the organisation has stripped him. Through occupational crime employees enriched their own jobs. Without the predation component, salaries earned for doing these jobs would also have been ridiculously low and thus creating a big deficit or inequity leading to dissatisfaction. In the absence of this 'supplementary' source of income particularly during the hyperinflationary period between 2006-2008, the official wages in Zimbabwe would have scarcely constituted and sustained a livelihood. Earlier studies elsewhere (Ditton, 1977; Mars, 1982) showed that workers who engaged in occupational crime were somewhat compromised as they were less well positioned to organize and make militant demands for better wages (Friedrichs, 2010).

Consistent with the co-evolution thesis, the confluence of unfavourable macro-economic forces particularly during the economic crisis and the accompanying high degree of tax evasion and avoidance should have triggered adequate employee dissatisfaction and collective resistance. Following Till's (1978) mobilization theory of collective action such a situation should have presented sufficient conditions and opportunities to induce or coerce employees to engage in strikes. Furthermore, employee suffering and the massive stay-aways by other public sector employees should have also galvanised interest for collective action. According to the mobilization theory once the individuals belong to groups such as workers committee, mobilization depends on definition of interests, the degree of organisation and the costs and benefits of taking action (Kelly, 1998). The mobilization model has five components; interests, organisation, mobilization, opportunity and the different forms of action. Mobilization refers to 'the process by which a group acquires collective control over the resources needed for action' (Till, 1978: 7), or 'the ways in which individuals are transformed into a collective actor.' (Kelly, 1998: 25). Opportunity includes the balance of power between the parties, the costs of repression by the ruling group and opportunities available for the subordinate to pursue their claims. Ruling groups may be said to engage in counter-mobilization in order to change the definition of interests, to thwart the creation of collective organisation and to repress attempts at mobilization and collective action. Collective action may take different forms according to the balance between interests, organisation, mobilization and opportunity.

However employees may also express their grievances by creating 'counter systems' in the form of socially acceptable 'fiddling practices'. Employees who are marginal members of an enterprise tend to be more likely to 'steal' from the employer as a way of handling grievances (Tucker, 1988; 424). With fiddling, united opposition to employers by way of unionized or organised strikes is unlikely, as grievances can be pursued and equilibrium restored individually and covertly. Overt actions such as collective job action are not viable options to deal with grievances in the absence of a strong union. The system can also easily detect it and ruthlessly deal with any strikers. Fiddling may be the only available social control mechanism.

4.2 *Same bed but different dreams!*

Predation is not always a collective behaviour. There are still many employees in this organisation who still continue to work genuinely for legitimate pay. Furthermore, management is a lot that grew from the ranks and by virtue of institutional memory and personal experience is aware that not all jobs within the organisation created opportunities for fiddling or pilferage. There are employees in certain jobs whose only source of 'remuneration' is formal salary. These may respond to the prevailing poor working conditions or conditions of service by genuinely agitating for collective job action or strike action. The employees do not necessarily share common interests. For example, the Chairman of the workers committee who was relatively more radical than any other worker representative was non-technical and did not belong to the traditional fiddling group. For 'non-fiddlers', strike action provides the opportunity to express dissatisfaction or discontent and hence reinforce their demands for a better deal while for 'fiddlers' such action has more than one meaning; it reduces the chances of capital accumulation since fiddling only occurs in the execution of formal tasks and secondly it may serve to veil 'covert institutions'. To strike some bit of a balance, workers who fiddle often have to deduct the cost of 'sweeteners' from their 'invisible' earnings in order to secure services from fellow workers who have no access to fiddling (Ditton cited in Mars, 2001: 19).

Managers are equally not a collective entity and treating them as bound by value consensus is treading into problems of reification and 'totalization' myths. As Lyotard (1984) posited, value consensus was a horizon which would never be reached. The CEO's fight against corruption in the organisation has only been partly supported by a few middle-level managers most of whom continued to pay allegiance to the 'fiddling' groups from which they were promoted. This is a case of being in the *same bed but different dreams!* Workers particularly fiddlers also recognise

the existence of the 'fiddling manager' within the corporate structure who ironically is often the most 'trusted' by the executive. They would not want to expose their managers and would make efforts to protect them through exceeding revenue targets and maintaining a harmonious industrial relations atmosphere through reduced *labour militancy*. Occupational crime in the form of 'fiddling' is not a free-standing entity executed by a 'few rotten-apples' but produced through precariously balanced figurational patterns of actions and interactions (Chia, 1996). Systems do not cheat, and steal; but people do. The system in which crimes are committed is no accident of history but deliberately shaped by some of the people who most profited from those crimes. So the offenders are to blame, not only for their behaviour within the system, but for constructing the system itself. As such predation is a 'joint human enterprise between actors' (Henry, 2009:8). Both managers and non-managerial employees are responsible for maintaining predation in the organisation but not necessarily for the same reasons.

For example, Station Integrity Plans (SIPs) and Asset Declaration Forms (ADFs) that were introduced to bust predatory activities at the inception of the new organisation have hardly restrained predation. Employees interviewed did not also remember what was contained in those forms and also if they had made declarations under any oath as was required by law. Worker representatives in subtle collusion with some less committed managers have continued to question the motives behind these instruments which have been subject of discussions in most station works councils. There has also been debates as to what constitutes 'assets' and also how to account for the methods of accumulation vis-à-vis the need to protect individual constitutional rights to own property. The findings indicate that one of the most popular assets declared were residential stands or houses particularly by workers who had genuinely acquired these through the recently introduced corporate assistance programmes in the form of housing loans. So what was the logic of SIPs and ADFs? Borrowing from Derrida (1981), one begins to discern that, 'what is organized and representable can be set out in advance for control and manipulation'. In this process, 'a deliberate form of suppression occurs which remains hidden and inexplicable' (Chia, 1996: 145). Strategy formulation is value laden and thus the development of pure plans, untainted by practical concerns, is a mirage. Both the problem of corruption and the strategic possibilities to deal with it are 'wicked'. SIPs and ADFs are representational devices often intended to portray predation as less complex and wicked; reducing it to a controllable and manageable entity (Goldstein, 1990). This form of reification and manipulation while appearing unethical inadvertently fosters stakeholder confidence particularly the state and the paying public. The actions are a form of 'systematically distorted information aimed at reifying, manipulating and politicizing communicative act that is shunted into the creation of consensus' (Habermas, 1982; Lyotard, 1984). Some of the elements of these strategies can be analysed from the view point of the strategic use of symbolic expressions. They are rhetorical tools used to convince audiences that an effective corruption management system had been instituted. Such activities may be more symbolic than substantive political commitment to curtail corruption and only meant to strengthen the system's integrity. It is an irreconcilable fact that during the time the Zimbabwean economy was in terrible shape (2007-2008) with the local currency having effectively collapsed some lowly paid non-managerial employees could still afford to import ex-Japanese cars. This was also done even through port of entries where they were stationed and under the nose of local management!

4.3 Strikes as 'dramaturgy'

According to Clegg (1979) strikes will be more prevalent where employees possess the means, the motivation and the opportunity to strike. Due to fiddle-proneness, motivation to strike could be probably the only missing link. In this organisation, collective bargaining mechanism that was created in 2002 has been rendered obsolete. Perhaps both the authorities and workers have internalised the organisation's ability to create opportunities for individuals to reward themselves in the absence of salary increases. As table.2 indicates the reported work-stoppages experienced between 2003 and 2010, were mostly very brief and in a form of go-slows mostly ranging from brief hours to half-day long. Interestingly this increased labour quiescence prevailed at the height of the economic meltdown in 2008 when the local currency became effectively obsolete. Where labour militancy occurred it may not necessarily reflect expressed dissatisfaction with the system! There is need to examine the meanings and purposes attached to other forms of behaviour in the workplace in order to determine whether or not such behaviour could be construed as an expression of conflict. As Erving Goffman (1959) posited, when such action occasionally occurs, it may only be 'dramaturgical' (Ritzer & Goodman, 2003: 211). Engaging in collective job action may be a kind of 'front stage' only serving to create an impression that the 'fiddlers' are also suffering like any other. Since some of the worker leaders (workers committee members) are part of the fiddling league their participation in work stoppages is a political craft meant to mystify real dynamics at work. The effects or any potential resultant damage from the collective job action is managed in such a way that the status quo is quickly restored! Fiddling becomes part of 'calculative bargaining'. That there has not been any significant form of collective job action experienced in the organisation does not suggest absence of conflict but only that the conflict is being expressed differently: stealing at

work! It may only be manifested when discontent is arising from actions or changes that disturb covert institutions. Work stoppages reduce opportunities for ‘perching’ by ‘wolf-packs’ and as a result they are reduced to mostly insignificant go-slows ranging from brief hours to a day (table 2)..

Table 2. Overview of Strike Pattern: 2003-2010

Period (year)	Cause of strike	Description*
2003	CBN (collective bargaining negotiation) deadlock over salary increase	Most pronounced in Harare Cash offices and Investigations unit for about a day. Generally very brief and sporadic in other centres. Alleged agitators disciplined.
2006	It was as a result of a delayed CBN	Just spontaneous and most pronounced at ports of entry. Affected mainly afternoon and night shifts. No action against ‘strikers’.
2007	Protracted CBN which was taking long to be finalised. Protest over nonpayment of salaries as scheduled.	September: Nearly two days at ports of entry December: Workers only gave notice to go on strike. Strike Aborted
2009	Authorities failed to honour the Labour Court arbitral award.	Low intensity. Go slow for about two days at ports of entry particularly Beit-Bridge border post.

Source: *Author’s own elaboration.*

As a result of occupational crime added power accrues to both managers (employers’ agents) and employees. Managers can exercise discretion in how they control fiddling to ‘acceptable’ limits without necessarily disrupting the current psychological contract. Even in circumstances where fiddling has been detected and management choose to aggressively punish the perpetrators and in any case, managers are more likely to be believed than the employee. The collective bargaining process takes this form: Management has learnt to take worker’s complaints or demands seriously only if the latter are willing to strike over them; and workers know what is expected of them. The circumstances that prevailed in Zimbabwe particularly during the hyperinflationary period were sufficient enough to induce workers to strike, resign or absent themselves from work. In addition even with the relations between management and staff especially workers committee hopelessly embittered workers chose to remain put at work. Predation buys off labour satisfaction as it serves as a safety valve for employee frustration. ‘Fiddlers’ are not totally against strike action for adjustment of salaries and benefits but have more problems with management practices or change of work rules that are likely to disturb the ‘covert institutions’ from which they drive spoils. For example, when ‘mobile scanners’ were introduced at border posts in 2005, workers collectively ‘resisted’ the new technology citing the adverse effects of radiation particularly on the health of expecting female officers. The issue incessantly dominated works council meetings across the organisation. This is because whenever covert institutions are threatened by change, the individual is vulnerable, first in the way his job is organised, and secondly to changes in the way he negotiates for and obtains the reward he believes is due to him. Employees cannot say much except to withdraw their labour either totally or partially ranging from act of sabotage, absenteeism, resignations, go-slows and strikes where possible.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

The central argument of this article was that industrial peace or labour quiescence tended to be exchanged for managerially tolerated levels of predation. Institutionalized predation suppresses the overt manifestation of employee dissatisfaction which normally arises in the form of collective job action. Criminogenic or fiddle-prone structures such as the one observed in this case and other similar public sector institutions are constraints to worker mobilization. Furthermore, any attempts by managers at fighting occupational crime are resisted, both overtly and covertly, as this will be in conflict with the actors’ modes of production and consumption. Although the Zimbabwean taxman’s work-suit may be one of the sources of his alienation or dissatisfaction, it may not be a problem to be solved but a condition to be exploited. It is a ‘condition that the leadership can live with and knows best’ (Menkhaus, 2010: 97). For example, low salaries or wages and other accompanying poor conditions of service expressed in the taxman’s contract of employment do not provide sufficient conditions and opportunities to induce or coerce employees to engage in collective action.

The different ways in which jobs at all levels are structured also serve to facilitate or inhibit particular types of occupational crimes. The existing opportunities for predation mediate the balancing of relations between corporate and worker interests in a way that guarantees industrial peace. Occupational crime was not necessarily rational and any attempts to institute structural obstacles to minimise opportunities for such behaviour may continue to be resisted individually and collectively. The absence of overt expressions of dissatisfaction in the form of strikes (or prevailing labour quiescence) is not necessarily and always health for the organisation. In-company disciplinary institutions and labour court decisions have pinpointed certain work procedures and areas within the system that are specifically problematic and needing urgent review. However the challenge is the systemic or institutionalised nature of activities which render any possible solutions ineffective as both managers and subordinates may be reluctant to kill a practice from which they possibly drive spoils.

Occupational crime has been systemically transformed into employees' 'durable' reward systems and sufficient enough to compensate for the possible benefits that would have been realised had they embarked on a collective job action. Institutionalised predation in the form of employee fiddling has not only become a communicative act and social practice, but an idiom of accumulation. Employee predation conspires against the strength and interests of organised labour rendering the traditional industrial relations and a free collective bargaining orientation by workers hardly relevant. To a large extent occupational crime in the Zimbabwean public sector has the potential to induce labour quiescence.

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