

Collective bargaining and human development: A capability approach to labor unionism in Polomolok, Southern Philippines

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ARTICLE	INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: collective bargaining agreement capability approach labor union Dole Philippines human development		This study analyzed the impact of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) between Dole Philippines, Inc. and the Labor Employees Association of Dolefil Polomolok Hourlies (LEAD.PH) in South Cotabato, Southern Philippines on the development of workers' capabilities. It used Martha Nussbaum's Capability Approach (CA) framework. It examined how CA enhances employees' capabilities and functioning through economic security, health, education, and work-life balance. A mixed-methods approach was used, analyzing the 2020-2025 CBA and a phenomenological exploration of union members' lived experiences through semi-structured interviews. The results show that the CBA significantly improves health and work-life balance through benefits such as health care and leave entitlements. However, challenges remain in terms of economic stability, access to technical training, professional development opportunities, and wage structures that may not fully meet the evolving needs of the workforce. These constraints can affect workers' agency and their ability to enjoy the life they value. Despite these challenges, the study highlights the importance of incorporating comprehensive development into CBAs, addressing both the personal and professional needs of workers. This study underscores the need for CBAs to prioritize employees' well-being and skills development to ensure they have the opportunity to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives.

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Introduction

Polomolok, South Cotabato, home to Dole Philippines Inc., the nation's largest pineapple plantation spanning 12,000 hectares (Municipality of Polomolok, 2025), has become a hub for agro-processing, producing pineapples, bananas, cocoa, and asparagus. Dole exports over 30 million processed pineapple cases and 13 million fresh boxes annually, contributing 95% of the town's agricultural output (Restor, 2024). Amid this economic activity, collective bargaining plays an important labor framework in ensuring workers' rights and enhancing their conditions. The latest Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) between Dole Philippines Inc.- Pineapple Division and the Labor Employees Association of Dolefil Polomolok Hourlies (LEAD.PH) exemplifies efforts to improve employee satisfaction and productivity.

Although labor unions have pushed for economic justice in the Philippines, many workers continue to experience poor wages, job insecurity, and unsafe working conditions. With only 6.5% of workers unionized and 8.4% covered by collective agreements, negotiating leverage is weakened and workers face barriers to accessing these benefits, emphasizing the need for stricter labor laws (Economic Policy Institute, 2021; Ramos & Suguitan, 2024).

A notable example of these labor issues was seen at Dole Philippines, where 478 regular employees were unceremoniously dismissed in September 2020. The corporation alleged pandemic-related financial losses, but no verified information was offered to back up the decision. The timing of this instance was particularly concerning—the layoffs coincided with a scheduled certification election, a critical process that allows workers to organize and negotiate better working conditions formally. Many employees, some with over a decade of

service, saw this as a purposeful attempt to hinder unionization, a well-documented practice known as union-busting (Center for Trade Union and Human Rights, 2020). This case is sociologically and politically noteworthy given that it demonstrates how corporate power dynamics undermined worker solidarity and collective bargaining, increasing structural inequities in labor relations.

This issue highlights serious policy implications about job security, union representation, and labor rights, especially when regular employees are laid off without cause while contract workers continue to be hired. How these dismissals were communicated by text message and carried out in the presence of security agents raises serious concerns about compliance with fair labor practices. Furthermore, claims of compulsion to reject a certification election reveal structural barriers that prohibit workers from exercising their collective rights. In response, the Center for Trade Union and Human Rights (2020) has asked for the restoration of the 478 impacted workers, as well as the repeal of rules that impede union elections.

Aside from its legal and economic implications, the dispute highlights broader structural issues in labor governance, particularly those regarding workplace democracy, worker agency, and equitable labor relations. The frequency of precarious employment and restrictions on union activity emphasize the need for stronger institutional frameworks that protect workers' rights while maintaining economic stability.

By focusing on fundamental rights and possibilities for dignified employment, Nussbaum's Capability Approach (CA) moves the emphasis away from conventional economic measures and toward a comprehensive assessment of human well-being (Nussbaum, 2000, 2006, 2011). The

CA highlights how limitations on collective bargaining and job security jeopardize economic stability and labor rights, going beyond wages and employment rates (Horbachevska et al., 2024). This view, which is consistent with global labor standards, emphasizes the necessity of labor reforms that support democratic labor principles, improve job security, and fortify collective bargaining (Davidov, 2024).

In the context of DOLE, some of Nussbaum's key capabilities are directly at risk. First, one's ability to exert control over one's environment, including the right to engage in labor and political activities, is compromised. The coercion used to prevent a certification election violates employees' rights to participate in collective bargaining and self-representation, both of which are fundamental activities that allow workers to influence their working circumstances. The current negotiating agent effectively deprives workers of the ability to choose their representatives by impeding union elections.

Second, the ability to maintain bodily integrity, which includes protection from undue harm, is at risk. While this often refers to physical safety, in the work context, it also includes job stability and protection from arbitrary dismissal. Retrenchment as a weapon for union repression increases economic vulnerability, preventing workers from meeting their fundamental necessities and limiting their access to steady employment. This loss has a direct impact on their ability to subsist and thrive, as they are denied opportunities to earn a steady income.

Third, the ability to affiliate—which allows employees to create meaningful social connections and participate in collective actions—is severely limited. LEAD's blocking of a certification election erodes workers' collective power, isolating them and limiting their ability to bargain for higher

salaries and better working conditions. This not only violates individual rights but also undermines democratic workplace norms.

To address these gaps, policy interventions should prioritize ensuring the free and fair conduct of certification elections, preventing retrenchment from being used to suppress unions, and providing retrenched workers with access to skills training, legal aid, and reemployment programs. Such steps would restore workers' economic capacity while protecting their rights (Center for Trade Union and Human Rights, 2020). Framing labor policies using Martha Nussbaum's Capability Approach emphasize their importance in protecting workers' rights and dignity beyond economic considerations. Her concept of "combined capabilities" stresses how individual potential is dependent on external support. She contends that governments must provide ten fundamental capabilities, including life, liberty, security, and political participation. Without these safeguards, workers risk exploitation and have limited access to collective bargaining (Nussbaum, 2011).

Amartya Sen's Capability Approach emphasizes well-being through comparative metrics, Nussbaum goes beyond this by pushing for state responsibility in promoting fair labor conditions (Nussbaum, 2011). Her "thick vague theory of the good" claims that governments have a moral obligation not only to avert harm but also to actively create conditions that increase workers' liberties (Nussbaum, 1990, 1992). Nussbaum presents several dimensions, including job satisfaction, personal security, cognitive development, emotional well-being, and control over one's material and political surroundings (Nussbaum, 2000, 2006). These capabilities provide significant implications for labor policy, shifting the emphasis away from mere economic stability and toward building work conditions that promote both security and self-determination.

Policies aligned with the CA can promote more inclusive and equitable labor reforms by ensuring workers' ability to organize, bargain, and shape their workplaces

The labor dispute at Dole Philippines highlights the need for fair labor practices and stronger protections for workers' rights. By fostering transparent negotiations and collaboration between management and unions, companies can ensure job security and well-being for employees. This aligns with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), promoting equitable economic growth and stability for both workers and businesses (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2025). However, such disputes highlight serious gaps in labor law enforcement, emphasizing the crucial need to match company operations with both national and global labor norms.

The Philippine Development Plan (PDP) and Ambisyon Natin 2040 place a premium on inclusive economic growth, job stability, and fair salaries to eradicate poverty and promote long-term livelihoods (Manasan, 2020). However, persistent labor enforcement concerns, notably in SOCSARGEN, where agribusiness and fisheries are dominant, impede these objectives. The SOCSARGEN Development Agenda aims to promote economic competitiveness and social equality, however, disputes like Dole Philippines highlight weaknesses in enforcement and policy implementation. Research, particularly studies from the Basic Education Research Fund (BERF), emphasizes the need for improved labor rights and regulatory control to close the policy-reality gap (Libdan et al., 2023). Without decisive action, both national and regional development objectives risk failing. Protecting workers' rights is critical to promoting equitable growth, resilience, and social justice.

Horbachevska et al. (2024) contend that the Capability Approach (CA) transforms corporate human rights commitments from damage avoidance to actively increasing human capabilities. They emphasize that human rights due diligence (HRDD) regulations, such as the EU's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive, enable businesses to contribute to SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and SDG 17 (Partnership for the Goals). This approach advocates for protections that go beyond financial support to improve workers' well-being and empower them to organize and advocate for fair labor (Nussbaum, 2000, 2006, 2011). The Dole labor dispute emphasizes this requirement, as union suppression jeopardizes workers' political freedoms, bodily integrity, and collective decision-making. Policies must go beyond salaries to protect workers' rights to organize, negotiate, and earn a decent living.

The Capability Approach (CA) offers an effective framework for assessing labor relations, shifting the emphasis away from strict financial measures and toward human well-being. This viewpoint calls for a more nuanced analysis of whether workplace conditions allow employees to perform important functions—such as excellent health, education, and security—or limiting their potential. CA provides a more complete approach to long-term, sustainable labor reforms by broadening policy conversations to encompass personal liberty and worker agency (Regier, 2024; Bueno, 2021; Davidov, 2024).

While integrating the Capability Approach (CA) in labor policy presents hurdles, notably in quantifying well-being, empirical studies demonstrate its ability to manage these complexities (Stephens, 2023). The CA broadens labor policy by embracing paid, informal, and unpaid work, providing a more complete picture of worker well-being (Bueno, 2022). According to Davidov

(2024), the CA enriches labor law by tying laws to dignity, expanding substantive freedoms, and ensuring that workers can fully enjoy their rights. Although the CA does not address all labor restrictions, it does encourage collective bargaining, workplace equity, and worker wellness, which aligns with initiatives to decrease labor inequities and empower workers. Applying CA principles to collective bargaining enhances worker agency, dignity, and fair growth.

Table 1. *Ten Central Capabilities by Martha Nussbaum Categorized into Four Major Areas*

Theme	Central Capabilities by Nussbaum
Economic security	Control Over One's Environment
Health and wellbeing	Life Bodily Health Bodily Integrity
Education	Senses, Imagination, and Thought Practical Reason
Work-life balance	Emotions Affiliation Other Species

Source: Adapted from Nussbaum (2000), modified by the researchers to align with the objectives of the study

This study relates Nussbaum's ten core capabilities to important facets of human development, with a focus on work-life balance, health (life, physical health, and physical integrity), education (senses, imagination, cognition, and practical reason), and economic security (control over one's environment). By connecting these components, we contend that this method enables a more thorough evaluation of labor capability and offers a better comprehension of the circumstances of workers and their capacity to flourish in their environment (Nussbaum, 2000, pp. 78–80; Nussbaum, 2006, pp. 76–78).

Furthermore, Robeyns (2006, as cited in Holden et al., 2021) emphasizes the importance of comprehensive changes that increase freedoms and options, indicating

how the Capability Approach (CA) offers a more comprehensive framework for assessing welfare and education. Robeyns (2021) argues that monetary compensation alone is insufficient to address deeper social and psychological deprivation, emphasizing the notion that worker well-being must go beyond financial security. Similarly, Bueno (2021) extends CA to worker rights, arguing for workplace autonomy, economic independence through work, and freedom from economic necessity. He contends that current labor rights frameworks frequently prioritize protection over growing freedoms and proposes a human economy paradigm that encourages meaningful work while reducing superfluous labor.

In addition, Kimhur (2020), McGranahan (2020), and Terzi (2005, as cited in Haeghele & Maher, 2023) apply the Capability Approach (CA) to labor, education, and workplace systems. Kimhur criticizes the European Employment Strategy for promoting human capital over individual skills, but Terzi calls for educational fairness and inclusivity, which aligns with labor reforms for marginalized workers. McGranahan links these concepts to workplace democracy, emphasizing employee ownership as a means of increasing worker autonomy. Ruggeri Laderchi (1999, as cited in Robeyns, 2021) discovered that income alone cannot assess key functions such as education, health, and infant nutrition, as evidenced in Chile and Peru, where many people who lacked necessities were not classed as low-income. Robeyns (2021) examines monetary, capability-based, social exclusion, and participatory poverty measures in further detail, illustrating how subjective assumptions influence poverty policy. These studies illustrate the importance of a multifaceted approach to poverty and labor relations, which goes beyond economic indicators to assess well-being. Robeyns (2021) investigates multiple poverty

evaluation tools—monetary, capability-based, social exclusion, and participatory—to demonstrate how subjective assumptions influence poverty reduction measures.

Notwithstanding its labor policy benefits, the Capability Approach (CA) has drawbacks, especially when it comes to social and natural capital. Although the CA encourages sustainable development (SD), Llopis et al. (2020) contend that Nussbaum's interpretation falls short in taking into consideration these elements, which are critical to labor relations. Further research on human development and worker empowerment is necessary, as workers' rights extend beyond economic concerns to include social and environmental dimensions. Nussbaum's Capability Approach (CA) remains significant in labor relations by highlighting human development, autonomy, and dignity, extending the focus beyond material stability (Bartolomei et al., 2024). Moreover, Vecchio and Martens (2021) emphasized CA's influence on shaping laws, policies, and educational frameworks, reinforcing labor regulations that protect the social, emotional, and economic well-being of labor workers.

Method

This study adopted a qualitative framework that investigated how the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) between the Labor Employee Association of Dolefil Polomolok Hourlies (LEAD. PH) and Dole Polomolok Philippines, Inc. enables employees to expand their capabilities and function to pursue their desired lives. This research utilized two primary methodological research methods: archival and phenomenological inquiry. The Collective Bargaining Agreement 2020- 2025 and data collected from the interviews served as sources.

Also, this research examined the CBA through document content analysis to understand the labor benefits provided and identify the specific capabilities being enhanced. This method allowed for a systematic analysis of the CBA's policies and provision through areas of the Capability Approach (CA) Framework of Nussbaum: economic security, health and wellbeing, education, and work-life balance (Nussbaum, 2000, pp. 78–80; Nussbaum, 2006, pp. 76–78). Through analyzing the CBA, it provides patterns and categories that reflect how the bargaining agreement shapes the labor employee's work conditions and overall well-being. Document Content analysis framed an objective means of understanding various agreements or documents (Shekhar et al., 2021).

Furthermore, this study conducted semi-structured interviews to acquire diverse lived experiences of the labor union members of LEAD.PH, especially how the CBA expands their human development (well-being, job satisfaction, and professional growth). Through their thematized lived narratives (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Konstantinos, 2024), this research aimed to illustrate how collective bargaining agreements translate into real-life improvements in employees' working and living conditions. In addition, interviews were conducted in person at DOLE Philippines Inc. in Polomolok, South Cotabato, utilizing guided questionnaires and a phone recorder for clarity and review for analysis. Framed from Nussbaum's Capability Approach (CA), the questionnaire was reviewed and validated by different social sciences experts (one philosophy professor, one political science professor, and one psychology professor) to ensure it is appropriate and relevant to the research objectives. The informants for this study were ten (10) available and willing labor union members of both sexualities (men and women) selected through quota sampling

and for data saturation (Wutich et al., 2024). Moreover, the informants were provided with an informed consent form before the interviews to guarantee their voluntary participation throughout the study. It highlighted the study's commitment to the principles of confidentiality and data privacy (Millum & Bromwich, 2021).

The narratives from the lived experiences were transcribed in the local language and translated into English language. Lastly, the data analysis involved coding responses and categorizing themes (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Konstantinos, 2024) that reflected the employees' experiences of the CBA's impact. The findings from the thematic

analysis were cross-checked with the content analysis of the agreement that established the comprehensive discussion of this paper. The utilization of the qualitative framework limits the insights of the study into the practical impact of the CBA and justifies its significance in enhancing the labor worker's capabilities.

Results and Discussion

This section delves into the results and discussion of our study on the role of Dole Philippines Inc.'s Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) in fostering human development through the Capability

Table 2. Analysis of Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) provisions of LEAD.PH from 2020-2025 through the Capability Approach framework

Themes	Provision in the CBA	Capabilities Addressed	Functionings
Economic Security	I. Management Prerogative and Job Security V. Work Opportunity VI. Rates of Pay and Job Evaluation XVI. Redundancy XVIII. Bonuses and Allowances XXIII. Party Responsibility	<i>Control over one's environment:</i> Relates to economic and social opportunities to influence and participate in one's environment.	Economic freedom and stability
Health and Well-Being	XV. Retirement IX. Sick Leave and PTB Leave X. Maternity Leave XIV. Medical, Dental, Hospitalization, and Insurance IXX. Transportation XXI. Special Provisions XX. Leaves, Medical, and Other Benefits of New Employees	<i>Life:</i> Capability to live a full, long life. <i>Bodily health:</i> Capability to maintain health and access necessary healthcare. <i>Bodily integrity:</i> Security and freedom from violence, ensuring physical autonomy and safety	Be healthy, undergo medical check-ups, receive proper medication, and minimize risk of injuries or any vulnerability.
Education Empowerment	XVII. Education and Research Fund XII. Military and Educational Leave	<i>Senses, imagination, and thought:</i> Engaging in education and cultural activities, enabling critical thinking and imagination. <i>Practical reason:</i> Ability to form one's own view of what is good, encouraged by education.	Express opinions and judgment, engage in critical thinking, and exercise practical reasoning abilities.
Work-Life Balance	VIII. Vacation Leave XI. Personal Business (BX) and Bereavement Leave III. Union Security, Recognition, and Check-Off XIII. Union Leave VII. Overtime, Rest Day, and Holiday Premium, and Night Shift Differential XXII. Grievance Procedure	<i>Emotions:</i> Ability to experience attachments and maintain emotional well-being. <i>Affiliation:</i> Social connection and participation in relationships. <i>Play:</i> Capability to enjoy recreational activities and leisure. <i>Other species:</i> Interacting with the natural world, contributing to life balance and mental well-being.	Emotional stability, social inclusion, enhanced social networks, mental well-being, and the enjoyment of leisure activities. These can be achieved both within and beyond the workplace.

Source: Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) between LEAD.PH and Dole Phils. Polomolok (2020-2025) and Nussbaum (2000)

Approach. It looks at how employees may attain essential capabilities through the CBA, such as economic security, healthcare, education, and a healthy work-life balance.

The table presents a thematic analysis for analyzing the provisions of a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) through the lens of the Capability Approach. The Capability Approach is a theoretical framework that focuses on the individuals' potential to expand their freedoms and opportunities for well-being. The researchers focused on 4 areas that separated and categorized the 10 central capabilities aligned with Nussbaum's framework.

First, the Collective Bargaining Agreement's (CBA) economic provisions prioritize workers' economic security through fair salary, employment stability, bonuses, and allowances. These conditions empower employees by limiting financial concerns, thus improving their well-being. This is consistent with the Capability Approach, which emphasizes the importance of economic security to personal freedom. According to Nussbaum (2000), economic security allows people to make decisions and pursue their goals without fear of deprivation.

Second, the CBA's Health and Well-Being clauses promote employee wellness through benefits such as sick and maternity leave, insurance, and workplace safety protocols. These measures ensure life, bodily health, and integrity, which are critical parts of Nussbaum's (2000) capabilities, by protecting employees' physical and mental health, encouraging personal and professional development, and increasing productivity.

Third, the CBA's Education Empowerment sections promote employee growth by providing educational leave, training, and skill development programs that improve their talents and career possibilities. These programs promote

critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities, enhancing job performance and overall productivity. By fostering "*senses, imagination, thought, and practical reason*," according to Nussbaum (2000), these clauses foster both intellectual and practical skills, giving workers the ability to influence their own lives via education and critical thinking. Finally, the Work-Life Balance provisions include flexible scheduling and leaves, allowing employees to balance personal and professional duties. Fostering play, affiliation, emotional well-being, and connections with "other species," all of which are essential for flourishing, these provisions lower stress and raise job satisfaction (Nussbaum, 2000). Overall, the CBA emphasizes:

Extending employee freedoms: The CBA empowers workers to make decisions about their lives and pursue their well-being by providing financial security, access to healthcare, and chances for education and growth. This is consistent with Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen's Capability Approach, which emphasizes allowing individuals to fully function in society by increasing their capabilities and fostering their agency.

Improving opportunities: The CBA allows employees to advance their careers, improve their skill sets, and give back to their communities, creating an atmosphere where they may thrive in personal and professional areas. This is consistent with Sen's emphasis on creating conditions for individuals to realize their goals by improving their abilities.

Labor, leverage, and life: How the CBA expanded capabilities and valued functionings at Dole Philippines

A call for economic stability

A common theme in the interviews was dissatisfaction with pay, which many informants felt was inadequate given the

rising cost of living. The salaries are just enough to cover necessities. These are highlighted by the interview responses. While acknowledging the CBA's role in providing a salary sufficient for basic needs, informants emphasized its inadequacy in fully supporting their livelihoods. An informant stated that:

Our salary is low; it increases by 3% every year.

Insufficient pay amid rising costs: Basic incomes are provided under the CBA to cover necessities, but many respondents emphasized that pay frequently falls short, calling for immediate action to increase wages. This would expand their capacity to operate successfully in areas such as economic stability and the pursuit of human flourishing, consistent with Nussbaum's emphasis on protecting the basics of human dignity. An informant mentioned:

I hope there will be an increase in salaries, considering the rising cost of goods today.

The rising cost of living makes it increasingly difficult for employees to sustain themselves on their paychecks alone. Research by Anwar et al. (2023) and Seubert et al. (2021) highlights how minimum wage earners struggle to make ends meet, leaving little room for discretionary spending or savings. This lack of financial flexibility contributes to economic insecurity, which, according to Fragoso (2024), Anand et al. (2020), and Gao et al. (2022) is a key factor in capability deprivation— a lens that views poverty as more than just a lack of income, but instead a restriction on one's basic capability. This is problematic because when limited basic capabilities— such as social connections and adequate education— are coupled with a restricting environment, their development opportunities are significantly reduced. In this way, economic security is

both a consequence and a determinant of limited capabilities.

Health and well-being programs

The interviews revealed many positive responses regarding employee health and well-being at DOLE. Employees have access to a variety of health benefits—social, mental, and bodily. The workplace offers a comprehensive range of health and well-being programs, emphasizing physical health through annual check-ups, training, and fitness activities. Informants expressed that:

We have a dispensary for emergencies like headache, stomachache, or a cold, also if necessary, we can go to Howard Hubbard Hospital.

We have a nurse on-site especially during peak season, because work can be exhausting.

Some programs support mental well-being and social health through team-building activities, though there may be opportunities for further improvement. Employees feel supported through the workplace environment and accessible benefits, though they also acknowledge that balancing health and work remains a personal responsibility. An informant affirmed that:

Yes, there are recreational activities at Dole, and we are given free time for ourselves.

Health and well-being are essential for a flourishing life, as stated by Bugelli et al. (2021). As a key aspect of a fulfilling life, health provides individuals with more opportunities to enhance their well-being and satisfaction, making it a fertile functioning. Recent studies of (Wolff & De-Shalit, 2013, as cited in Willand et al. 2021) notion of fertile functionings reaffirm its relevance in contemporary research on

capability theory. Thriving in areas classified as fertile functionings significantly increases the likelihood of positively influencing other aspects of life, conversely failing in this area can have a severe impact, leading to a corrosive disadvantage—where struggling in one area has numerous repercussions elsewhere (Wolff & De-Shalit, 2013, as cited in Willand et al., 2021). Dolefil demonstrates a strong commitment to employee well-being through comprehensive health provisions covering prevention, treatment, and recovery. These efforts extend across various health aspects, including physical, mental, and social well-being. The aforementioned provisions contribute to an individual's fulfillment in life, bodily health, and bodily integrity—3 of the 10 central capabilities defined by Nussbaum (2000). Till et al. (2022) and Van Der Veen et al. (2022) insist that physical health and mental well-being are closely linked to an individual's capabilities and functionings; health is not simply an outcome but is also an enabling factor for capability expansion.

Educational assistance and support for dependents

Through skill-building initiatives and educational support, the organization shows its dedication to staff development. As mentioned by an informant, specific training sessions demonstrate the organization's commitment to lifelong learning, enhance employee productivity, and foster personal development.

If you have finished some sort of education or skills training, it can be utilized at work, and in cases where you may lose your job, you still have the knowledge.

Some interviewees showed less interest in skills training and seminars, and from responses, some also have exclusive factors. On the positive side, educational assistance

from the company extends the provisions to employees' children. The CBA not only fosters capability building within its organization but also across their children; it not only allows their children's capabilities to be enhanced but also helps out with their financial capability as parents. An informant stated that:

Yes, there is an educational loan intended for tuition fees, and then it will be deducted from their salary.

An employee also stated that work tends to be repetitive, which suggests that the task is monotonous and does not necessarily require practical thinking or creativity.

The work is repetitive, so there's not much new to learn.

Juravich (2017, as cited in Omid et al. 2023) and Rajendra (2022) challenge this notion, arguing that so-called "deskilled" workers contribute more than just efficiency through simple hand-to-eye coordination. Instead, they gain wisdom and mastery over time through hands-on learning. These scholars assert that employees continue to exercise imagination and creativity, even in environments that may initially appear to require little skill or innovation.

While educational assistance is accessible, unfortunately, only selected positions at Dolefil are offered opportunities for growth from skills training, while most factory workers primarily develop their hard skills through repetitive tasks. However, while skills training for key positions and hands-on experience help process-based workers improve their hard skills, workforce productivity can be further enhanced by incorporating and emphasizing soft skills into the workplace. Soft skills, though often considered innate, can be improved and developed through training. Workshops and seminars focused on teamwork,

communication, and adaptability can significantly boost employee performance and long-term productivity (Lamri & Lubart, 2023; Sutil-Martín & Otamendi 2021).

Work and life balance

Workers deeply valued the leave benefits offered by the company. Paid time off for sickness, vacation, maternity, and grieving loved ones was seen as essential for navigating life's challenges. These leave options provide peace of mind, allowing employees to prioritize their health, family, and personal needs without fear of financial hardship or jeopardizing their careers. An informant accentuated that:

It helps in balancing work and personal matters, without added worries. It allows me to be present during joyous occasions and miserable moments like bereavement, as we are allowed to take leaves during such times.

Workers value the company's commitment to work-life balance, particularly in light of its extensive leave policies—paid vacation, sick, maternal, and bereavement leaves. Work-life balance is important for the company and its workers, it fosters commitment, satisfaction, and productivity (Thilagavathy & Geetha, 2021). Work-life balance reduces the conflict between career obligations and social roles and needs, such as parental obligations, health matters, and leisure activities (Limatujuh & Perdhana, 2023; Bajwa & Ahmed, 2023). Affiliations are fertile functions (Wolff & De-Shalit, 2013, as cited in Willand et al., 2021), with recent studies reaffirming their significance in research. As such, allocating time to enhance social networks is necessary for an individual. Likewise, an employee's emotional state is important; it facilitates crucial human development, and individuals grow by experiencing emotions such as anger, love, happiness, and sadness (Nussbaum, 2000).

Conclusion

Using Martha Nussbaum's framework for the Capability Approach, this study examined the impact of LEAD.PH's Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) on employees' capabilities at Dole Philippines in Polomolok, South Cotabato. This analysis focused on four key areas: economic security, education, health, and work-life balance.

The CBA's economic provisions support employees in acquiring basic needs, but wage structures remain vulnerable to economic inflationary problems. To improve economic security, future labor union agreements consider wage adjustments aligned with the inflation rates and the adoption of a “living wage” framework. Such mechanisms might ensure employees can maintain financial stability, reduce reliance on excessive overtime, and sustain active engagement in both the workplace and broader society.

In the area of health, the CBA provisions effectively enhance health-related capabilities by offering a wide array of accessibility. Emergency preparedness and prevention minimize fear for their safety and leniency toward ill or recovering employees, allowing them to worry less about the consequences of falling ill. These provisions are the CBA's highlight, allowing employees to achieve greater agency and expand their capabilities in many areas—life, bodily health, and bodily integrity. Some benefits extend to immediate family members; making more benefits available would allow employees to feel secure not just for themselves but for their families as well.

Educational provisions provide opportunities for learning and financial assistance for their children's education; however, most seek financial assistance more than the acquisition of skills, limiting capabilities. Employees are in a better position to observe and understand the processes, they should be allowed to express

their opinions concerning the production processes. Emphasis on hard and soft skills training— such as emergency response, equipment troubleshooting, skills training, teamwork building, and adaptability seminars would improve employee's senses, imagination, thought, and practical thinking. Considering existing provisions and potential improvements, a workplace that supports capability-building becomes an achievable goal.

Leave provisions allow employees to balance personal and career responsibilities. These policies allow emotional stability and self-care, allowing employees to take necessary breaks and address emotional and mental needs without worrying about repercussions. Work-life balance improves several capabilities such as affiliation, emotions, and play. Improvements can be adapted to the next CBA to better support the personal needs of the employees: Flexible working hours that allow employees to convert excess hours worked into equivalent time-offs, given that the minimum weekly hours are met. Part-time sick leaves also allow employees to take time off partially rather than for the entire day.

However, this study has limitations, it was conducted on a single multinational corporation, which may not fully represent the broader labor industry. Additionally, this study is based on interviews with only ten (10) labor union members, whose subjective experiences may influence their responses and pose a potential bias. Future studies should consider investigating multiple labor unions and an increased sample size, especially adding informants from labor institutions or civil society organizations (CSO) to provide a better insight towards the impact of the CBA.

The Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) contributes to human development by enhancing key capabilities, particularly in health and work-life balance. However,

limitations in economic security and education provisions impede the expansion of these capabilities. Stagnant wages amidst rising costs and limited learning opportunities restrict employees' capabilities and the functions they can achieve. While individual agency influences the realization of functionings, systemic improvements to the CBA are necessary to better align its provisions with evolving economic and social conditions. This study underscores the need for CBAs to prioritize employees' well-being and capability development, ensuring they have the opportunity to pursue meaningful and fulfilling lives.

Declaration of Ownership

This article is our original work.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest to declare in this article.

Ethical Clearance

This study was approved by the institution.

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