

WORKERS' PERSPECTIVE: BASIS OF SELECTION AND JOINING A TRADE UNION

Brajesh Kumar Parashar

M-Phil (Chemistry), MBA, MSW, M.Sc.(IT). Presently enrolled for PhD (Management) from CRIM Barkatullah University Bhopal (M-P.)

Abstract: *Industrialization is the only key to economic development because it is the fundamental process to utilize the enormous available human assets and other physical & natural resources for the consistent advancement of a developing country, like India.*

Trade unions are nothing but a "Pressure Group" (also known as Advocacy groups, interest groups, campaign groups, lobby groups, a protest group, or special interest groups), which exert a pressure and use various forms of advocacy on the management/ employers, or even on Govt. in order to influence policy, legislation, opinion, strategy, decisions etc. in favor of the workers/ employees. The aim of all pressure groups is to influence the people who actually have the Decision-making power (management, employer or Govt.).

Trade Unionism is a by-product of rapid industrialization right from the colonial era. A trade union is nothing but a well organized group of working class employees for protecting, sustain, and enhanced the group members' interests and benefits on the basis of unity of strength. Its main objective is to protect & protest its members from exploitation and enhance & advance the interests & benefits of them. They are the most appropriate organizations for complementary and improving the relations between the employer and the employees.

India now has more than 84,650 registered trade unions along with an unaccounted number of unregistered trade unions speckled across a wide spectrum of Indian trade & industries. This paper tries to understand what the basic philosophy of an employee behind the selection of a particular trade union over the others.

Keywords: *Industrial Relations, Trade union, Globalization, Pressure Group, Collective Bargaining, Workers' Participation in Management, Leadership.*

I. Introduction

Trade Unions are one of the important institutions in the sphere of Industrial Relations Management. Trade unions are basically the organizations of employees/ workers are those formed with the purpose to settle/ negotiate with the management or employers on an assortment of employment-related concerns. Trade union plays a chief role in signification interests of its members and in standardizing labour-market relations with the management/ employers.

All Trade Unions have their own ideologies, values, beliefs, motives & objectives and goals to achieve (with the help and active support of their members), which are included in their constitution, and each has its own philosophy, tactic, Plan & Policies, Strategy & Tactic to reach and achieve the above cited objectives & goals. Trade unions are providing a bridge for both employers as well as employees, because an individual employee cannot bargain with management for wages, terms & conditions of employment, and can not defend his interests as a successful, effective, and efficient manner. On other hand, employers also found it suitable, helpful, and beneficial to deal with a group of representatives or delegates and settled all issues pertains to employees effectively, efficiently with a lesser time interval. Thus, as a whole Trade Union is an effective instrument of defense against exploitation and provide a forum for collecting the forces of the working class. They are designed to abolish the exploitation of the working class through WPM (Workers Participation in Management).

II. Brief Historical Background:

In its initial stage the trade union movement has originated as a "Class-struggle" and the trade unions has been engaged to ensure and securing economic benefits for their members and demonstrated against the exploitation of workers by the employers. At first the mere purpose of trade unions was Economic, i.e., salvaging employees from exploitative employment and worst working conditions and use their accumulative collective strength in order to ensure fair wages, logical working hours and conditions, periodic rest and leave, some necessary amenities at work place like arrangement of drinking water, medical aids, housing facilities etc. For convenience, we can divide the history of trade unions into the two parts, (2.1) from beginning to 1947, and (2.2) from 1947 to 2016.

Development of Trade Union Movement: **(2.1) In the period of 1870 to 1947**, the working conditions as well as living standard of Indian employees were very poor and their working hours were very long. They were physically abused and exploited by the employer at each and every step of their employment, and this was the prime cause which exhausted in the form of the tool down, strikes, bands, gheraos, and lockouts during this period. These demonstrations, ultimately reinforced to the Trade Union Movement in India. During aforesaid period the Trade Union Movement was Humanitarian. Some friendly societies were formed to look into the welfare activities of workers. To regulate the wages, working hours, and other service conditions the following acts were acted during the aforementioned period.

01. Indian Factories Act-1881
02. Indian Factory Labour Commission in 1908
03. The Trade Union Act-1926
04. Royal Commission of Labour in 1931.

Another factor which provided the background for the Indian Trade Union Movement was the origin of the Indian National Congress in 1885 by A.O. Hume, and followed by the formation of following trade unions:

01. Bombay Millhand's Association formed in 1890, with an instantaneous aim of agitation for revision of first Indian Factories Act-1881.
02. Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants of India and Burma formed in 1897 and registered under the Indian Companies Act-1882.
03. Printers Union formed in Calcutta in 1905
04. The Bombay Postal Union formed in 1907
05. Kamgar Hitwardhak Sabha, Bombay formed in 1910
06. Social Service League 1910
07. Madras Labour Union formed as early as 1918, formed by B.P.Wadia in Madras.
08. All India Trade Union Congress (AINTUC) formed in 1920
09. Central Labour Board formed in 1922
10. Bombay and Bengal Trade Union Federation formed in 1922
11. Red Trade Union Congress 1931
12. National Federation of Labour 1933
13. Red Trade Union Congress merged with AITUC in 1935
14. Indian Federation of Labour 1941 etc.
15. The Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act-1946 also contains definite provisions concerning to trade unions.
16. The Industrial Dispute Act-1947

Since then, a proliferation of trade unions has come up on screen in almost all the industrial centers of the country. The legislation regulating these trade unions is the Trade Union Act, which was coming into existence in the year of 1926. This act gives legal and corporate status to the registered trade unions, and principally deals with the registration of trade unions, their rights, their liabilities & responsibilities and keep a close watch on their findings and its utilization in different activities. As per the Trade Union Act-1926, 'trade union' means "any combination, whether temporary or permanent, formed primarily for the purpose of regulating the relations between workmen and employers or between workmen and workmen or between employers and employers, or for imposing restrictive conditions on the conduct of any trade or business, and includes any federation of two or more trade unions". The Act has been administered by the Ministry of Labour & Welfare through its Industrial Relation Division. However, the Trade Union Act-1926 has been amended from time to time and the most important being the Trade Union (Amendment) Act-2001. The right to form a trade union is doubly recognized and accepted in our country by the constitution of India and the Trade union Act-1926.

In 1947 the Trade Union Act-1926 was amended for making the stipulation for compulsory recognition of unions; however, the Act has not been enforced.

(2.2) In the period of 1948 to 2016: The trade union movement in India after independence has become exceedingly politicized and this enforced a substantial impact on their role and functioning. After being independent, India sketched her own constitution where in an assortment of freedoms viz., freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of employment & freedom of settlement, etc. have been surefire and goal of social justice has been set up for the welfare of all citizens of our country. The Constitution of India gave a new orientation to the Trade Union Movement. Insertion of Article 19 (c) one of the Fundamental Rights which read as, all citizens shall have the right to form a union or association.

Industrial Policy Resolution in 1948 was also prepared for having industrial development & advancement in India. By this time, it was recognized that the question of maintenance of dynamic industrial relations was not a matter between employers & employees alone, but it was a fundamental anxiety of the Indian community.

In the initial stage of this phase the following Acts were enforced by the Govt. of India in order to improve the conditions of employees and their employment. The Coal Mines Labour Welfare Fund Act-1947, The Factories Act-1948, The Minimum Wages Act-1948, The Employees' State Insurance Act-1948, Industrial Policy Resolution, 1948 (which was again modified by the Govt. of India in 1956) and The Coal Mines Provident Fund & Bonus Schemes Act-1948.

The Code of Conduct and Discipline of Industries of 1962 was advanced by the employers and the employees for smooth the progress of the free growth of Trade Unions in India and eradicating all forms of compulsion and violence in industrial relations. For that reason, it makes available that every employee shall have the freedom and right to fasten together a union of his own choice. During the period from 1950 to 1980, many more trade unions came into view in various part of our country, based on regional / local political support. Some of them are as under-

The **Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC)** came into existence in 1948, as a result of the resolution passed by the United Board of the Hindustan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh, which was a labour organization working on the track of Indian National Congress-oriented leaders on the Gandhian Philosophy of Sarvodaya (meaning 'universal uplift' or 'progress of all').

The Socialists separated from the INTUC and formed a new organization, the Hind Mazdoor Panchayat, which was amalgamated with the Indian Federation of Labour in **1948** under the forename of the Hind Mazdoor Sabha (**HMS**).

In 1949 the unions supported by the Revolutionary Socialist Party have decided to separate from HMS and formed the United Trade Union Congress (**UTUC- organized by T.K. Shah**).

The Akhil Bharathiya Maha Sabha (ABMS) came into existence in 1951 affiliated by the Jan Sangh.

The Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh (**BMS**) has been the result of the pronouncement by the Jana Sangh in its convention on 23 July 1955 at Bhopal.

The National Front of Indian Trade Union (**NFITU**) was formed in **1970**; with assert that NFITU isn't controlled by any of the political parties, employers or Govt.

The annoyance of Emergency in **1975** led to the postponement of Trade Union constitutional rights and an unexpected fall in the trade union movement, and these activities again picked up momentum after the end of the emergency.

Trade unions exert pressure on the Govt. for amending the Industrial Dispute Act and got success in **1976**.

The first phase of fractional economic reforms was started in 1984, the Indian Govt. proclaimed a new Industrial Policy based on the acceptance of the principles of LPG (Liberalization, Privatization, and Globalization) considered basic to Indian Economy & Industrial progress. The thrust of this new policy has been on rising domestic as well as international competition through far-reaching application of market mechanism and facilitating counterfeiting of dynamic relationship foreign investors and technology sources.

The Private sector unions become progressively open to productivity liked concurrences that were later acknowledged by the public sector unions too. The next phase of economic reforms introduced in 1991, with the liberalization of Indian Economy for intact India with global economic trends. In this new and changed era of globalization, trade unions (both in public and private sectors) have accepted the importance of market forces & competition and play a necessary active supporting role in the management in order to increase quality, productivity and competitiveness. This changed scenario, employees mainly focused on their career, packages, and professional growths proved antagonism towards trade unions. Globalization has led to a rapid restructuring of the Indian economy in the last 25 years.

The Trade Unions in India are now busy in remonstrations against the attacks on their fundamental rights, right to collective bargaining, right to strike, closures/ layoffs of industrial units, Voluntary Retirement Scheme, and massive retrenchment, wage freeze, withdrawal or reduction in social security measures of workers as the side effect of globalization, and the jeopardizing growth of redundancy.

III. Functions of Trade Unions in India

The innermost function of a trade union is to represent people at work. The trade unionism to be the extension of the "**Principles of Democracy**" in the bubble of industry, require the trade union "to be institutions for conquering managerial autocracy to strengthen individual laborers and to give them tone of voice in the determination of the circumstances under which they have to function". In practice Trade Unions act as a mirror, which reflects the aspirations (in order to sustain, accelerate and maintain their interests & welfare) of employees of the organization. Trade unions carry forward workers' interests against any kind of exploitation and look after employees from "**Unfair Labour Practices**" by the management/ employer. Trade unions also help to ensure the health, safe and favorable or conducive working conditions for employees. They educate workers about their "**Rights & Duties**" and how to perform work with safety, what are the working norms as per the normal or overtime hours? And help them to sort out their **Grievances** at the

earliest. Trade unions also make certain the “*Workers Participation in Management*” and they always try to uphold and move forward the labor-management participation, cooperation and coordination.

It has been accepted in all socialist democratic countries, like India, that trade unions have to take a dynamic responsibility in preparing labor laws relating to the working class, production the way of living, **culture traits** and make certain the successful enforcement these laws on stipulated time frame. **Class-conflict** is required to be met through equal opportunity and collective bargaining agreements and joint consultations. The democratic state is familiar with the rights of the people to work, break and leisure time and upholding in old age, disease & disability, training and equal pay for equal work. Hence a trade union is an instrumental device which facilitates a group or class in the industry to bargain with the other group or class on equal footing.

In our country the *Workers' Education & Development Program* is supported by The *International Labour Organization* and implemented and sponsored by the Govt. of India. Trade unions are look upon as the most prevailing agent & agency to perform and monitor the Workers' Education & Development Programs all across the nation.

Trade unions also communicate their ideology, policy, activities; stand on a certain principle issue, achievements, and their further strategy and future planning among workers through publishing journals, new letters, magazines, and periodicals. They also try for enlarging their picture in worker's mind and extend membership.

In this globalized era, trade union plays a complimentary role along with management to enhance quality, productivity, and helps to maintain grievance at its lowest possible level at the earliest. Trade unions try to maintain and promote a cordial dynamic relationship between the employees and management and facilitate effectual communication with the management.

The trade union has to maneuver Govt. policy decisions in the favor of employees; hence they contribute in the formulation as well as time bond effective implementation of policy pertains to workers. The extent of trade unions' partaking in the political process of the Govt. depends mainly upon the stage of economic and social development. A trade union has assured *Workers' Participation in Management* (WPM), through the various established models (like Collective Bargaining model, Works Councils Model, Joint Management Council Model, and Workers' Self-Management Model) and this can be achieved by (i) Information Sharing, (ii) Consultation, (iii) Association, (iv) Joint Decision-making, and (v) Making Workers Shareholders. The amount of participation depends upon its scope, degree, and extent. The Trade Union Act-1926 also permits the constitution of the separate political fund in order to facilitate political act & action by a trade union.

While a Trade union functions in the interest of its members it should also accept community responsibilities like family planning, national integration, afforestation, blood donation & Eye checking camps, and launch campaigns against social evils, like, corruption, communalism, regionalism, castism, price hike, smuggling, dowry, censer/ aids, child labour, illiteracy etc. as well

IV. Why Do Employees Organize?

There is no universal answer to the question- why do workers organize? Partly, because each worker probably joins a particular trade union for his/her own reasons. Union workers receive more facilities in the form of holidays, sick leaves, bonus, overtime, piece work, medical aids, fringe benefits, long-term disability benefits, and better housing facilities etc. than do nonunion workers. In addition to this union workers feel the strength of unity which provides them confidence and better job security than the nonunion workers. In India this is the basic difference between the Government job and a private job.

V. Research Methodology:

Trade unions at the Ordnance Factory Organization not only act as an instrument to give voice to employee grievances & problems before management, but they also are reasonably concerned to welfare measures for employees and in improving their QWL (quality of work life). They actively participate in discussions with management at different levels on various issues regarding safety, security, shop floor grievance handling mechanism, working environment & conditions, overtime, pay fixation, MACP/ ACP, and various other worker-related issues like housing facilities, hospital facility, welfare, etc. Research was conducted at the Ordnance Factory Khamaria (Jabalpur). The total strength of the factory is 3849 (Approx.), out of which industrial workers are 3089 (Male= 2603 & Female= 486). For study purpose the factory is divided into twelve zones, each of them is contained between 222 to 310 numbers of workers.

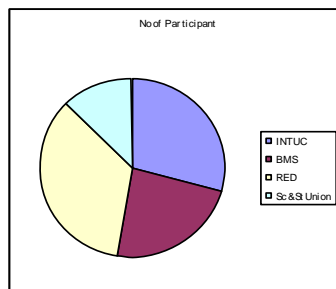
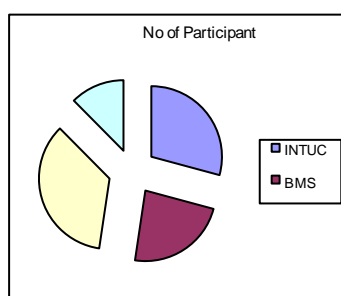
Table No 01: Distribution of Employees in Twelve Zones.

Sl No	Zone No	Total No Of Employees	Sl No	Zone No	Total No Of Employees
01	E-01	241	07	N-07	298 (Selected for Study)
02	E-02	222 (Lowest)	08	N-08	267
03	E-03	248	09	N-09	253
04	W-04	257	10	W-10	310 (Highest)
05	W-05	249	11	W-11	236
06	W-06	269	12	W-12	239

Out of twelve zones, one zone (Zone number N-07) is selected for the purpose of study. It included total 298 numbers of industrial employees. The total number of memberships of the four trade unions INTUC, BMS, Red, and Sc&St Union are 912, 719, 1079, and 379 respectively. Hence the zone number N-07 is the most appropriate one for the purpose of study because it has approximately the same proportion of employees to their total number of memberships.

Table No 02: Workers strength as per their belongingness to a particular trade union

SL no	Belongs to Trade Union	No of Participant	Male	Female
01	INTUC	087	76	11
02	BMS	069	60	09
03	RED	105	89	16
04	Sc & St Union	037	33	04
Total		298	258	40



The simple questions asked of participants, *what is your criterion to select the membership of a particular trade union?*

VI. Data Collection & Analysis with Interpretation:

The responses obtained from the 298 no's of respondents are tabularized below.

Table No 03: Criteria to select the Trade Union

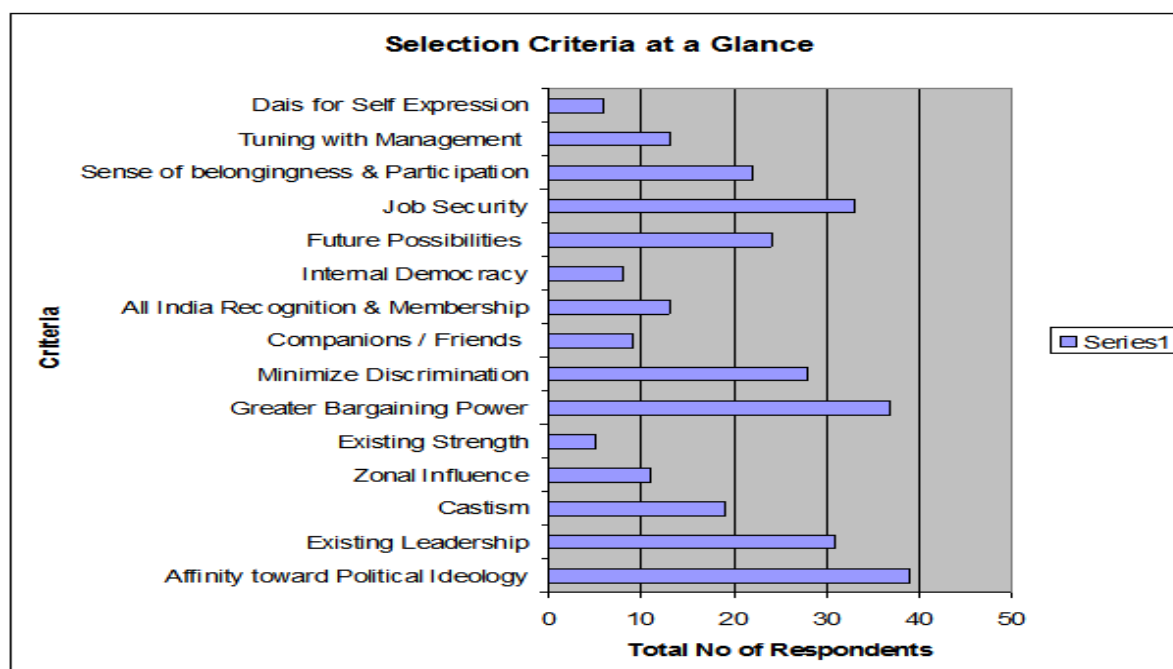
Sr No	Parameter of Selection	No of Respondents	Cumulative	Male No's	Male %	Female No's	Female %
01	Affinity toward Political Ideology	39	39	37	14.34	02	5.0
02	Existing Leadership	31	39+31=70	27	10.47	04	10.0
03	Castism	19	70+19=89	18	6.98	01	2.5
04	Zonal Influence	11	89+11=100	11	4.26	00	00
05	Existing Strength	05	100+05=105	04	1.55	01	2.5
06	Greater Bargaining Power	37	105+37=142	32	12.40	05	12.5
07	Minimize Discrimination	28	142+28=170	25	9.69	03	7.5
08	Companions / Friends	09	170+09=179	05	1.94	04	10.0
09	All India Recognition & Membership	13	179+13=192	09	3.49	04	10.0
10	Internal Democracy	08	192+08=200	06	2.33	02	5.0
11	Future Possibilities	24	200+24=224	23	8.91	01	2.5
12	Job Security	33	224+33=257	25	9.69	08	20.0
13	Sense of belongingness & Participation	22	257+22=279	20	7.75	02	5.0
14	Tuning with Management	13	279+13=292	11	4.26	02	5.0
15	Dais for Self Expression	06	292+06=298	05	1.94	01	2.5
Total			298	258		40	

It is crystal clear from the above Table No-03, that the affinity toward political ideology has greater impact followed by the greater bargaining power, job security, existing leadership, and minimize discrimination while when an employee select to join a particular trade union. The selection criterion at a glance is represented graphically in the following figure.

More than 6000 unions has been affiliated to BMS and it claims to have more than 17.1 million members across the country while the INTUC has emerged as the biggest central trade union with a membership of 33.3 Million. Both the BMS & INTUC has affiliated to the RSS/ BJP and Indian National Congress party respectively. At present the BJP and Congress are two largest political parties in India. The AITUC (All India Trade Union Congress), affiliated to the CPI, has retained at number three with a 14.2 million membership. Hence the political ideology certainly plays a vital role in the selection of a particular Trade Union as for as workers/ employees are concerned. About 14% people have a preference to political ideologies while selecting and join a particular union.

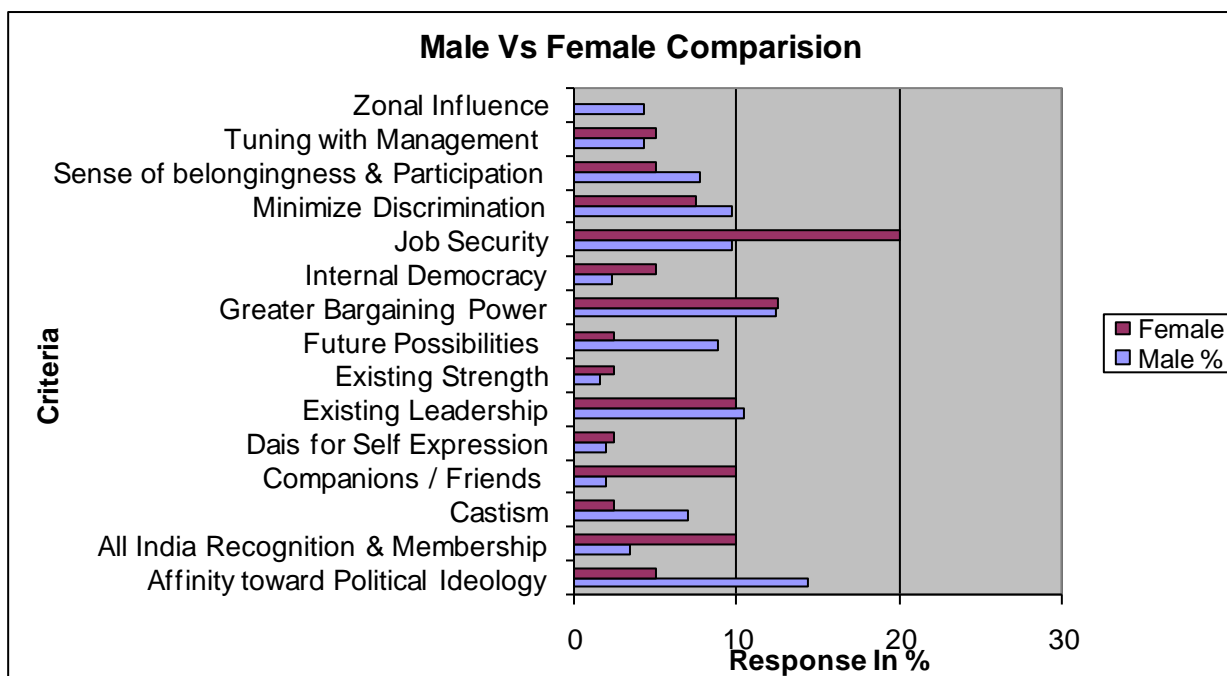
The other fact which plays an equally important role is Job Security. Job Security is more important than other factors such as salary and parks, particularly for women point of view in India. The Indian unemployed youths look for job security while choosing a company for employment point of view, followed by career development/ advancement opportunities.

Collective bargaining is a bipartite process. Beatrice Webb (1891), a founder of the field of Industrial Relations in Great Britain, first used the term “collective bargaining” or “collective negotiation”.



Both the parties (Management Representatives & workers' representatives) try to reach an agreement through table talk (Negotiation). In this bipartite process, the elected members of a trade union commonly present the workers' interests. This creates reliance, faith, confidence, and understanding between both the parties and circumvent unnecessary impediment/ hurdles arises under the process of coexistence, survival, and interdependencies of both on each other for maintaining a dynamic relationship in order to uphold industrial speed & velocity. A strong trade union secures greater bargaining power and negotiation power usually set out wages, overtime, work norms, health & safety, working conditions, grievance mechanism, training & development, arrangement of sporting amenities at workplace, welfare, and rights to participate in workplace/ company affairs. A collective bargaining agreement or a collective employment agreement functions as a labour contract between the two parties.

The ILO's Declaration on the Fundamental Principles & Rights at Workplace defines the “Freedom of Association and the effectual recognition of the Right to Collective Bargaining” as an indispensable right to workers. It certainly enhances the human self-esteem/ self-respect, autonomy and freedom of workers by giving them the opportunity to influence the establishment of workplace rules and ultimately control over their working lives. Hence, this is the second prevalent parameter, which facilitates a selection process of a particular trade union among the employees. Both male & female workers give an equal importance to this parameter of choosing a particular union.



This study shows that, the existing leadership also plays an important role while joining a particular trade union by an employee. The individual employee thinks seriously about the question “What leadership style works best for me and my organization?” before joining an individual trade union. In reality, choosing the right style, at the right time in the right circumstances is a key element of leader effectiveness. The leadership style should be tailored to the particular demands of the situation, the particular necessities of the people involved and the particular challenges facing the organization. There are three classes of supervisory techniques – autocratic or authoritarian leadership, democratic, participative, or consultative leadership and the laissez-faire or free-rein leadership and corresponding to these three techniques, there are three management styles – autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire. The Democratic style of leadership is most suited and successful in India. Democratic leaders decentralize authority as well as power to subordinates and they encourage the second line of leadership. It has characterized by discussion with the subordinates and their participation in the formulation of plans & policies. He persuades participation in decision-making.

Trade unionism continues to mirror the hierarchies in society – be they hierarchies of patriarchy, social group, women, children, Sc/St/OBC or minority groups. Consequently, it has left to issue-based groups to focus attention on the specific oppression of their constituencies. The role of trade unions in uniting working class struggles and building solidarity across various forms of struggles also endured. Sc&St union is the utmost patron in order to eliminate social discrimination. Discrimination in the functioning of an organization can come in many forms, including race, religion, belief, disability, age, sexual orientation, sexual harassment, and ethnic discrimination. When an organization does not take the proper steps to prevent internal discrimination in its functioning, the ambiance at the organization and the worker hesitate to join such an organization. Trade unions always play a key role in fighting all grounds of discrimination, by means of assortment of actions and tools. These comprise negotiating with employers to make certain that discrimination in the workplace has removed and equal opportunities has been ensured, supporting victims of discrimination, and keep an eye on discrimination in the workplace. Trade unions lead the fight for equal opportunities in the workplace.

Aristotle said, “All human actions have one or more of these seven causes; Chance, Nature, Compulsion, Habit, Reason, Passion, and Desire.....Man is by nature a social animal, hence, needs to belong is strong in both his personal as well as work lives”. Near about 7% of workers join a fastidious trade union because their friends, colleges, and seniors are the member of that union and they always talk about the activities, stands, and ideologies the union belongs. Therefore a newcomer employee joins that union either under group pressure or sometime under a trade union belongs a big banner affiliated to the ruling party. In the latter case an employee feel proud and honor to join such a trade union and make relationship with the top leaders of that particular union and political party. An employee looks a bright future/ career and a sense of belongingness and participation to join such a union.

VII. Conclusions

The existence of a strong and recognized trade union is a prerequisite to industrial peace. Trade unions play a vital role and are useful in effective communication between the management and the employees. Only a strong trade union can protect and protest the interests of workers at different forums by effective and dynamic leadership. The basic strength of a trade union involves in its dedicated and active members.

The political background and ideology from which an individual employee belongs have plays an important role while accepting membership of a particular union. Male employees give grater emphasized towards the political ideology on one hand, but on other the other hand women employees largely rely upon the job security. Greater collective bargaining power and existing leadership have equally influenced both the genders. Finally, if a trade union is dynamically involved in labor welfare activities at the Ordnance Factory Khamaria, employees may be motivated to remain emotionally involved in it, rather than joining another union.

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