

## IMPACT OF DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN TRADE UNIONS IN INDIA

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**Abstract:** This paper attempts to study the impact of demographic factors on women's participation in trade unions in India. Many strategies have been articulated both nationally and internationally to make it possible for women to participate in unions yet the level of women's participation in this arena remains low not only in India but globally. Indian trade unions remains challenged in hegemony of women into trade unions. The first and foremost objective of the study is to empirically investigate the impact of demographic factors such as age, education and marital status on women's participation in unions in India. Literature was reviewed on the demographic factors and their influence on women's union participation. Present study adopted a mixed method approach in the collection and analysis of data.

Results indicate that participation of women in union is influenced by marital status and their age whereas there is no significant evidence found on impact of educational qualification. The study recommends that the awareness and education of women pertaining to trade union should be enhanced on a regular basis. In the same way, women should also raise their voice for sharing of domestic responsibilities with their family members in order to have time to focus on union activities.

**Keywords:** Demographic factors, educational level, marital status, union participation

**Introduction:** Gender equality in the trade union has not been easy to achieve. Despite the fact that most countries have embraced democracy and consider trade unions as advocates of equality, they are failed to achieve equality in unions in general and at leadership positions in particular. The low participation by women in unions is not limited to any country, it is global, with the Nordic countries being among the notable exceptions. (Sir leaf 2010). As far as Nordic countries are concerned, they are about to close the gender gap as the percentage of women unionists is 41.1 percent.

Women's participation in trade union is influenced by demographic factors too. Various researches have indicated that demographic factors like age, marital status, number of children, age of the youngest child, educational qualification, caste and religion do matter for the women who would like to join the unions. Married women have more responsibilities than unmarried as they have to look after their children and have to strike a balance between family and work. One of the reasons for low participation of women in organized sector is dropout of the females after secondary school and before graduation. It is relatively higher in less educated and among graduates. There are some industries with low career opportunities and low pay scales where females are more employed than the males. (Mukhopadhyaya, IAMR, 2000, pp559- 61).

Empirical studies in India suggest that literacy has a strong impact on women's capacity to perform in the political institutions (Mohan et, al. 2005). In Nigeria it is expected that women who are educated will be more and will want to participate in political leadership. (Adedamola et, al. 2010). According to

Khan (2010) educational attainment helps women to be empowered by building money earning capability among them, developing confidence to face challenges, enhancing the ability to make decisions regarding themselves and the society. There is a wide variation between countries, however in the relationship between women's education level and their representation in formal politics. The United states which outranks other industrialized democracies in terms of the number of women in higher education has seen persistently low numbers of women in formal politics, reaching an all high of just 19.4% % of congress in 2015 (IPU 2015).Uganda, Rwanda and Mozambique among the poorest countries with adult literacy levels of just 41, 60.2 and 28.7 percent respectively have parliaments in which between 25 to 45 percent of legislators are women (Goetz 2003).Similarly in Kenya, provinces such as Nairobi and Central that claim higher levels of education still lag behind in the number of women parliamentarians (Kamau 2010).

Various authors like B. Heshizer and J. Lund , E. Snape, T. Redman, and A. W. Chan , J. C. Anderson , P. Nandakumar and S. Ravishankar , S. Modi, K. C. Singhal and M. Metochi also mentioned in their respective studies related to union participation that though demographic variables have generally not been useful in explaining union activity, factors such as age, marital status, seniority and education have not only been used in most researches in this area but have, more importantly, shown inconclusive and inconsistent results in case of union participation in general.

In one of the studies by Gregory. E Huszczo, he took nine demographic variables as a part of variables

related to participation in union activities in general. He found demographic variables to generally wash out in the regression analysis and role-type characteristics, attitudes, and social variables better at explaining the variance in the participation measure.

Nine demographic variables were also used as predictor variables: sex, age, size of community where raised, size of present community, whether parents were in a union, level of education, plant size, local union size, and union seniority. Each has been found to be related to union participation in at least one previous research efforts. Results also confirm Anderson's (1979) finding that demographic variables lack usefulness as predictors of union participation. Such variables have been over- used in previous research in this area.

In most cross-sectional studies union membership has been found to be systematically related to a number of personal characteristics such as age, sex, race and education.

Marital status and number of dependents are other personal characteristics that have been examined as potential determinants of unionisation (Scoville, 1971; Bain and Elias, 1985; Berg and Groot, 1992; Fitzenberger et al., 1999), but here the evidence is usually inconclusive.

Gordon et al (1980) found that female members' expression of union loyalty was more positive than male workers although males participate more in union activities. This apparent discrepancy may not be due to gender per se, but rather to differences between men and women with respect to diverse variables such as the greater experience of work/family conflict among working women, lack of opportunity or discrimination. The traditional family responsibilities of women may limit their ability to work for the union, while the fact that most union leaders are men restricts the availability of female role models and may limit the attraction of an activist 'career' for women (Gallagher and Clark, 1989). A survey of union leaders in the United States for instance indicates that women are underrepresented in top union positions (Dale, 1992).

**Hypotheses related to demographic factors and participation of women in trade unions**

**'Age' and participation of women in trade unions**

**H1: There is no significant difference among the different age groups of women unionists**

Various studies have found no significant relationship between age and union participation and union loyalty (e.g. Bemmels, 1995; Deery et al, 1994; Magenau et al, 1988; Sherer and Morishima, 1989), however some authors have found a significant positive relationship (Conlon and Gallagher, 1987). Organisational commitment researchers have suggested that older workers are more strongly

committed to their organisations because of the investments they have made in their jobs and their achievement of a better job fit over time (Meyer and Allen, 1997). In the same manner, older members' higher commitment level may be a reflection of their future ambition to contest for leadership positions having been in the union far longer; they might also feel they are best placed to lead the union.

**H2: There is no significant difference in the marital status of women unionists**

**'Marital status' and participation of women in trade unions**

Marital status has not usually been included in studies of union commitment (Barling et al, 1992). However, Magenau et al (1988) found no significant relationship between 'family status' (a composite index of marital status and the presence of children in the household) and commitment to either organisation or union. But this is not to suggest that marital status should be conclusively discarded as inconsequential.

**H3: There is no significant difference in the Educational Qualification of women unionists**

**'Educational Qualification' and participation of women in trade unions**

Concerning education, there seem to be mixed findings. Some have found no significant relationship between education and union commitment (Barling et al, 1990; Fukami and Larson, 1984; Magenau et al, 1988), while others found a negative relationship (Bemmels, 1995; Deery et al. 1984). It seems likely that the impact of educational level will reflect composition of the particular sample being investigated. For example, Deery et al (1994) used a sample of 249 white-collar unionists in Australia while Barling et al (1990)'s data were obtained from 100 members of a white-collar union in Canada. Cultural factors may thus account for the difference.

**Findings And Results: Participation of women in unions among different Age groups:**

In the following table, age wise classification, of participation of women in unions has been shown. As obvious from the table, participation in unions is maximum for the age group of 40-50 followed by the age group of 20-30. Surprisingly, in comparison to the other age groups, for the age group of (30-40) years, the participation in union is least.

Union Part.	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
AGE			
=21-30	42	3.1889	.97435
31-40	45	3.5111	1.02642
=41-50	120	4.0800	.82874
51 and above	198	4.0596	1.03514
Total	405	3.9144	1.01351

**Testing the means of Participation of women in trade unions and Age**

**Test of Homogeneity of Variances**

Union participation

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
3.501	4	401	.016

**ANOVA**

Union participation

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	36.891	3	12.297	13.042	.000
Within Groups	378.097	401	.943		
Total	414.988	404			

**Participation of women in unions and Marital Status:**

In the following table, marital status and participation of women in unions has been shown. As obvious from the table, participation in unions is maximum for the married women followed by the single and separated. Surprisingly, though married women are considered the busy due to family responsibilities yet their participation is highest

Union participation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Marital status			
Single	40	2.7533	.87656
married	345	4.1194	.90629
separated	20	2.7000	.48966
Total	405	3.9144	1.01351

**Testing the means of Participation of women in trade unions and marital status**

**Test of Homogeneity of Variances**

Union Participation			
Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
3.263	3	402	.039

**ANOVA**

Union Participation

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	97.920	2	48.960	62.075	.000
Within Groups	317.068	402	.789		
Total	414.988	404			

**Participation of women in unions and Educational Qualification:**

In the following table, participation of women in unions has been shown on the basis of Educational qualification. As obvious from the table, there is no significant difference in the participation of women in trade union as per educational qualification. People belong to different qualification participate in unions as per their need for achievement and affiliation.

Union Participation

Educational Levels	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
less than 5	25	3.2960	.86732
6-10	20	3.5800	.23605
11-12/diploma	86	3.7279	.99058
Graduate	274	3.9808	1.03040
Total	405	3.9144	1.01351

**Testing the means of Participation of women in trade unions and Education level**

**Test of Homogeneity of Variances**

Union Participation

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
1.296	3	402	.294

**ANOVA**

Union Participation

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	22.619	3	7.540	7.706	.294
Within Groups	392.369	401	.978		
Total	414.988	404			

**Discussion And Conclusion:** Results indicate that women’s marital status, and their age influence their participation in union however there is no significant

evidence of educational qualification impacting their participation in union. The study recommends that the awareness and education of women pertaining to trade union should be enhanced on a regular basis. In the same way, women should also raise their voice for sharing of domestic responsibilities with their family members in order to have time to focus on union activities. The greater reluctance of women in India to join unions can be attributed to their stronger

domestic commitment, the ascendancy of men in the union leadership ranks and women being historically less dedicated to the industrial pattern of living. The findings of this study have a special implications for union leaders who are determined to evoke a pro-union response and are looking for means to sustain women workers' commitment to unionism. The paper also has implications for economists, social policy framers and NGOs.

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