

Employee Inclusion & Non-Inclusion in IT Employees Trade Union in Bengaluru: A Study of IT Professionals

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ABSTRACT

The state government of Karnataka has certified the formation of the Karnataka State IT/ITES Employees Union (KITU) with an aim to help lakhs of IT employees and provide them a platform to put forth their grievances. As the concept of IT union is still in the infancy stage the research has aimed to understand the information technology (IT) employees' perception and approach towards union formation in the Bengaluru IT Industry.

The researcher through this study aims to identify the factors influencing inclusion of union among IT employees. The researcher also attempts to find out the opinion of employees regarding these factors influencing inclusion of union among IT employees with respect to their demographic profile. The paper also focuses on knowing the reasons for employees non association with a union.

The researcher has used exploratory and descriptive research design for the study. A total of 208 IT professionals from different organizations participated in this study who were dispersed throughout the organizational hierarchy and were selected via convenience sampling to reflect a mix of age, experience, gender and position they held in the organization. The data was collected through a structured questionnaire.

The researcher has identified three factors like the Individual Factor, Group factor and Organizational factor that predominantly influence the

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inclusion in union among the IT employees. The study also identified good management support, dislike interference of union, loss of individuality and less fear of job insecurity as the reasons for employees non-inclusion in IT companies.

Keywords: *Employee Perception, Factors Influencing Inclusion, KITU, Reasons, Non-Inclusion, etc.*

INTRODUCTION

A trade union is an organization of workers who come together to achieve common goals in common interest areas such as wages, hours of work, and working conditions. Basically a trade union bargains with the employer on behalf of union members and negotiates with employers. Trade Unions in India are registered and file annual returns under the Trade Union Act (1926). The labour commission of Karnataka, home to the country's largest tech hub in Bengaluru, has certified the formation of the Karnataka State IT/ITES Employees Union (KITU) under the Trade Union Act, 1926, and Karnataka Trade Unions Regulations, 1958. Bengaluru alone has about 1.5 million employees in the IT and IT-enabled services sectors, and nearly 4 million employees across the country (ET, Nov, 2017).

There are lot of aggrieved IT employees who have filed a case against their employer for unfair trade practices such as lay-offs, working hours, etc. According to the NASSCOM (2017) report the IT industry adds on an average 150000 employees every year. The formation of KITU plays into the global trend of the emergence of a 'Tech Left', which has employees beginning to confront employers. Economic Times, 2017). It has been reported that unionized employees have lower job satisfaction than non-unionized employees (Green and Heywood, 2015; Hammer and Avgar, 2005; Renaud, 2002) and that employers tend to oppose unions (Freeman, 2005; Gould, 1996; Kochan, 1986), which makes the study of job attitudes among unionized employees interesting. The mundane and modular work carried out by the majority of employees in the ITeS sector has been admonished by Ramesh (2004) and Sandhu (2006), who call these employees "cyber coolies" ("coolie" is a title owned by unskilled native laborer in India and "cyber" denotes the realm of work being carried out on computers). The majority of IT/ITeS firms backed by NASSCOM persistently lobbied against unionization in the sector. They typecast collectivization with blue collar jobs signifying "evil stuff" (ideological suppression by employer, Gall, 2001).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Saikat, et. al., (2018), has investigated that the role of perceived organizational and supervisory support is an antecedents to two distinct forms of psychological ownership i.e. job focused and organization focused. Mahmood (2016), states that labour markets support the role of trade union and it is not the strength in today's employment scenario. Hills (1985) recognized four job features as significant influences on employee attitudes towards union as; lack of autonomy, lack of job security, pay adequacy and the degree of danger associated with work. The loss of union power (Sapelli and Halevi, 2009) empowers the management to push for more cost efficiency and productivity, which is often a trade-off with employee welfare, and this can result in hostile employee attitudes towards their jobs, such as job insecurity and lack of trust. Ravinder Jit (2016), focuses on the ill-effects of politicians managing the trade union portfolio in the companies, which discourages internal leadership. Sarkar S, et al (2014), emphasises that if the employees have collectivist attitude then the trade union activities and power can be enhanced. The cultural attitude of white-collared employees is crucial in determining the success of trade union in IT and service sector. The majority of IT/ITeS firms backed by NASSCOM persistently lobbied against unionization in the sector. They typecast collectivization with blue collar jobs signifying "evil stuff" (ideological suppression by employer, Gall, 2001). Sing (2013), attempts to understand the perception towards trade union activities. The study has found that the trade unions are passing through a difficult period. The members are losing confidence in their utility. The slow implementation of labour laws and delays in disposal of cases is also discouraging the trade union activists. Silvia (2012), has found that the trade union in the banking eurozone is doing very well from the time of its implementation. The paper argues that the Eurozone's banking sector has become more stable, better capitalised and its risks more controlled than in 2008 but this is at the expense of profitability. Dhar (2011), Bist (2010), analysed the perception of employees towards trade union in the IT sector. They have found out that organized trade unions will provide a legal and ethical framework to the employees for voicing their grievances and become more upfront for their rights to work. Unionisation will lead to a more dignified work place atmosphere with freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining being guaranteed to the employees. Selamoglu (2008) has discussed the reasons

for joining trade union and also the collective understanding of workers, the perception of workers on necessity of being a member, the understanding of workers on union policies and the member-trade union relationships. Lipset 2001), Fiorito, (1996), are of the opinion that the private sector unionism has declined in the US, the perceived difference between the private and public sector union is a biggest factor. Mans (1986) in his study on psychology of acting, joining and quitting states that there is evidence of multi-dimensional participation in unions. Martin, (1978) in their study seek to investigate the extensive findings which has been published and attempts to present sociological generalization of union member habits with reference to their participation as individual member, as well as participation in a group.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to understand the perception of Bengaluru IT employees towards the certification issued by the labour commission of Karnataka for the formation of Karnataka state IT/ITES employees union (KITU). Through this paper, the researcher aims to identify the factors which influence the employees to join the union and how the demographic variables effect those factors. The paper also highlights on the reasons for non-inclusion in union by the employees.

Sample Size: The target population for this research are the employees who are currently working in the Bengaluru IT sector. A total of 208 IT professionals working at different levels were part of this study. The researcher has used disproportionate stratified random sampling technique and has contacted employees working at junior, middle and senior level in their respective organisations.

Questionnaire: The data was collected with the use of structured questionnaire, where variables were identified from the past literature and scaled questions were framed on 13 items and measured through Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The questionnaire had totally 26 questions including the demographic variables considered for the study. The data was collected through google forms and personal administration by the researcher.

Scope of the Study: The scope of this study is limited only to the employees currently working in the IT sector in Bengaluru. The important factors considered by employees to join the union and also the reasons for IT employees to avoid joining a union.

Research Questions: The past literature states that the formation of union will protect the interest of employees. The legal framework will give employees a platform to voice their opinions (Dhar, 2011, Bist, 2010). Since the employees working in the IT sector are individualistic, the researcher wants to find out answers to certain questions.

1. What factors influence an IT employee to join union?
2. What are the reasons for not joining trade union,
3. Do all IT employees have the same opinion about joining trade union?

OBJECTIVES

To answer these questions, three objectives were framed.

- To identify the factors influencing inclusion in union among IT employees.
- To analyse the opinion of employees regarding the factors influencing inclusion of union among IT employees.
- To identify the reasons for employees non association with a union.

DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

Demographic Variables

Out of the 208 respondents 119 were male and 89 were female. only 59 respondents were post-graduates and 149 graduates. Most of the respondents are in the entry and junior level i.e, 111 respondents out of 208 are having work experience between 1-6 years, 97 respondents are having work experience of more than 6 years but less than 12 years. Only 75 respondents out of 208 respondents were aware about the NOC given by Karnataka government to form IT employee Unions, whereas 133 employees did not have any information on this. 123 respondents out of 208 respondents wanted a union in their organisation, whereas, 85 respondents were not keen as they felt, it may increase their job insecurity. 111 out of 208 respondents will join the union, if given an opportunity, the remaining 97 were not interested. 47 out of 208 respondents believe that, their organisation will give them an opportunity to be a part of the union,

remaining 161 respondents felt that their organisations are not receptive to the idea of starting union or employees joining the union.

The opinion of the IT employees on the objectives mentioned above was analysed based on the three objectives.

1. To Identify the Factors Influencing Inclusion of Union Among IT Employees.

This objective was achieved with the use of factor analysis. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was done on the 13 items that was used to measure the perception of employees to join the Trade Unions.

Table 1: KMO Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.884
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1506.980
	Df	78
	Sig.	.000

The KMO test indicates the sample adequacy. 13 variables considered for the study, have a KMO value of 0.884 which is greater than 0.5. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test measure to check if the data is suited for factor analysis. From the analysis of the data the researcher has obtained KMO value of 884 which is above 0.5 and hence the sample size is adequate to continue further analysis. KMO and Bartlett test is used to evaluate the strength of the linear association among the set of items in the correlation matrix. KMO is a measurement of sampling adequacy that compares the magnitudes of the observed correlation coefficients to the magnitudes of the partial correlation coefficients. The result of KMO is .884 which is higher than .5 which is good. Bartlett test is to test the null hypothesis that correlation matrix is an identity matrix. Chi square value is 1506.980 and Sig. value is less than 0.05. Therefore, the test outcome suggests reject null hypothesis and conclude that correlation matrix is not an identity matrix. Given these two results above, the correlation matrix appears to be factorable.

Rotation maximizes high item loadings and minimizes low item loadings, thereby producing a more interpretable and simplified solution.

Table 2: Rotated Component Matrix

Rotated Component Matrix			
	Component		
	1	2	3
6) There is Discrimination among Men And Women my Organization	.849	.006	.146
1) I feel Pressurized by my Employer	.743	.284	.130
5) I' am not satisfied with the Standing orders of my organization.	.656	.448	.253
13)I' am not able to Express my Terms Effectively by individual bargaining	.593	.266	.483
2)I believe Unions are Important for Protecting my rights and Interest	.029	.837	.250
3) I believe working conditions in my Organization will improve if I join A union.	.232	.835	.117
11)My Salary, Allowance, Perquisites are neither attractive nor according To my knowledge and skills	.329	.590	.395
4) I think my job is Insecure in my Organization without support of a union.	.508	.588	.143
10)I' am not satisfied with the Benefits Provided to me by my organization	.343	.492	.408
9) The HR Dept. in my organization is Not very supportive to my needs.	.164	.091	.880
7) There is lot of politics in my Organization with respect to Promotions and Appraisal.	.066	.377	.781
8) I' am not able to solve my problems In my organization with my manager Or management.	.487	.229	.650
12) Laws in my organization are Anti-Democratic.	.472	.221	.498
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.			

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

From the Rotated Component Matrix Table THREE factors are identified. The factors are named as follows:

The Factors are Named as Follows

- Individual Factor (there is discrimination at work, employer pressurises, not satisfied with standing orders, individual bargaining ineffective).

- Group factor (protecting rights & interests, will improve working condition, salary, job security, not satisfied with benefits).
 - Organizational factor (organisation is not very supportive, promotions and appraisal, unable to solve problems, laws are anti-democratic).
2. *To Analyse the Opinion of Employees Regarding the Factors Influencing Inclusion of Union Among IT Employees.*

This objective was analysed taking the demographic variables such as gender, age and level in which the respondents are working in their respective organisations.

Ho: There is no significant difference in the opinion of male and female employees on the factors influencing their inclusion in an IT union.

Ho1.1: There is no significant difference in the opinion of male and female employees on the individual factors influencing their inclusion in an IT union.

Table 3: Opinion of Male and Female Respondents on the Individual Factors

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
INDIVIDUAL FACTORS	Equal variances assumed	.165	.685	1.180	206	.240	.16515678	.14000800	-.11087554	.44118909
	Equal variances not assumed			1.197	198.547	.233	.16515678	.13801681	-.10701017	.43732373

The Levene's test for equality value is 0.685 which is greater than 0.05, which accepts the assumptions in t-test that the variance is assumed to be equal, thus at 5% significance, the p value is 0.240 which is > 0.05 , thus H_0 is accepted. Hence, the opinion of male and female regarding the Individual factors influencing inclusion in union among IT employees is same.

Ho1.2: There is no significant difference in the opinion of male and female employees on the group factors influencing their inclusion in an IT union.

Table 4: Opinion of Male and Female Respondents on the Group Factors

Independent Samples Test									
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper
GROUP FACTORS	Equal variances assumed	1.546	.215	-2.790	206	.006	-.38555114	.13786783	-.65740342 -.11369885
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.748	176.482	.007	-.38555114	.14029108	-.66241516 -.10868711

The levene's test for equality value is 0.215 which is greater than 0.05, which accepts the assumptions in t-test that the variance is assumed to be equal, thus at 5% significance, the p is 0.006 which is < 0.05 , thus H1, i.e alternate hypothesis is accepted. Hence, the opinion of male and female respondents regarding the Group factor influencing their inclusion in the IT union is not same in Bangalore IT Sector.

Ho1.3: There is no significant difference in the opinion of male and female employees on the Organizational Factors influencing their inclusion in an IT union.

Table 5: Opinion of Male and Female Respondents on the Organisational Factors

Independent Samples Test									
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper
ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS	Equal variances assumed	6.118	.014	2.425	206	.016	.33594479	.13851640	.06285324 .60903634
	Equal variances not assumed			2.514	205.702	.013	.33594479	.13361848	.07250746 .59938212

The levene's value is 0.014 which is less than 0.05 which fails to accept the assumptions in t-test that the variance is assumed to be equal, hence variance is not assumed to be equal for this factor, thus at 5% significance, the p value is 0.013 which is < 0.05 , thus H1, i.e. alternate hypothesis is accepted. Hence, the opinion of male and female respondents regarding the Organizational factor influencing their inclusion in the IT union is not same in Bangalore IT Sector.

H2: There is no significant difference in the opinion of employees of different age group regarding the factors influencing their inclusion in union.

Table 6: Opinion of Employees With Different Age Group on the Individual Factors Influencing Their Inclusion in Union Post Hoc Tests

Individual Factors					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	23.696	4	5.924	6.561	.000
Within Groups	183.304	203	.903		
Total	207.000	207			

Table 7: Comparison of Opinion with Different Age Group on the Individual Factors Influencing Their Inclusion in Union

Multiple Comparisons				
Dependent Variable: INDIVIDUAL FACTORS Tukey HSD				
(I) age	(J) age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
21-25	26-30	-.94511221*	.19133642	.000
	31-35	.29723522	.32527385	.891
	36-40	-.13640363	.55359199	.999
	41>	-.05113530	.67598806	1.000
26-30	21-25	.94511221*	.19133642	.000
	31-35	1.24234743*	.36258456	.007
	36-40	.80870858	.57630597	.626
	41>	.89397691	.69471169	.700
31-35	21-25	-.29723522	.32527385	.891
	26-30	-1.24234743*	.36258456	.007
	36-40	-.43363885	.63349982	.960
	41>	-.34837052	.74284439	.990
36-40	21-25	.13640363	.55359199	.999
	26-30	-.80870858	.57630597	.626
	31-35	.43363885	.63349982	.960
	41>	.08526833	.86745536	1.000
41>	21-25	.05113530	.67598806	1.000
	26-30	-.89397691	.69471169	.700
	31-35	.34837052	.74284439	.990
	36-40	-.08526833	.86745536	1.000

Table 8: Opinion of Employees With Different Age Group on the Group Factors Influencing Their Inclusion in Union

ANOVA					
Group Factors					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5.000	4	1.250	1.256	.289
Within Groups	202.000	203	.995		
Total	207.000	207			

Table 9: Opinion of Employees with Different Age Group on the Group Factors Influencing Their Inclusion in Union

ANOVA					
Organizational Factors					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.781	4	.695	.691	.599
Within Groups	204.219	203	1.006		
Total	207.000	207			

The Anova analysis at 5% significance level is 0.000, which indicates that there is a difference in the opinion of employees with different age groups regarding the individual factors influencing their inclusion in the IT union. To know, which age groups differ in their opinion a post-hoc analysis was done which revealed that there was a difference between the age groups 21-25 & 26-30 as the p value is 0.000 and 26-30 & 31-35 as the p value is 0.007, which is < 0.05 . Hence, the results indicate that other age groups have the same opinion on the individual factors contributing to their inclusion in the IT union.

The p value at 5% significance level is 0.289 for group factor and 0.599 for Organizational factor influencing their inclusion in the IT union respectively. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted as there is no difference in the opinion among the employees.

H2.1 There is no difference in the opinion of employees on the factors influencing their inclusion in union.

This objective was tested using Anova. The p value at 5% significance level for individual factor and group factor is 0.479 and 0.449 respectively. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted as there is no difference in the opinion among the employees. But the p value for organizational factor is 0.003, which is < 0.05 , we accept the alternate hypothesis and conclude

that the employees have a different opinion on the Organizational factor influencing their inclusion in the IT union. The post-hoc analysis at 5% significance level, indicates that there is a difference in the opinion of the employees working in junior and middle level as the p value is 0.002. There is no difference among the junior and senior level and senior and middle level employees.

3: To Identify the Reasons for Employees Non Association with IT Unions.

The respondents were given 8 options with multiple selection methods to select the reasons that they feel the most important for them not to join a union. The 8 reasons which was given for the employee to select were as follows: Supportive management, feeling of blue collar employee, loss of individuality, supportive HR department, good benefits provided by Company, less Job Insecurity, high level of competency, do not like union leader interference.

Important reasons for not joining union based on gender of the respondent are; 57% of male employees and 42.5% of female employees felt that they have a very supportive management, 65% male and 34.9% females felt that they do not like union leader Interference, 68% male and 32% female felt that if they join union they will lose their Individuality and 65% male and 35% female employees felt that joining a union will lead to job insecurity. Important reasons for not joining union based on age are; 80% of the employees in the age group of 21-25 years felt that they have a very supportive management and the remaining 20% between the age groups of 26-30, 31-35, 36-40 felt that they have supportive management. 77% of the employees in the age group of 21-25 years and 23% between the age group of 26-30, 31-35 and 36-40 felt that they dislike of Interference of union. 77.4% between the age group of 21-25 and 32.6% between the age group of 26-30, 31-35 and 36-40 felt that there is a loss of individuality, if attached to a union. 80% of the employees in the age group of 21-25 years and 20% between the age group of 26-30, 31-35 and 36-40 felt that joining the union will increase their job insecurity. This indicates that the young crowd in the organisations are not in favour of joining unions.

DISCUSSION

The concept of unions is mostly associated with the manufacturing industry in India, where the unions have protected the interests of the workers through collective bargaining. Through the unions the workers

have fought for higher wages, job security, working conditions and other demands. The manufacturing sector employees usually have a class-conscious movement. The IT industries usually follow the system of hire and fire and most of the employees feel that joining the union will increase their job insecurity. There are many instances where, if the employee is indulging in groupism and is vocal about his concerns, he or she would be blacklisted as they seem to be troublemakers for the company. The IT companies are usually good paymasters and also protect the interest of the employees, in terms of pay and working conditions. Most of the employees are individualists as they demand payment based on their skill sets and so may not want a collective approach. In this backdrop, a registered union will definitely encourage more distressed employees to approach the company, when they are having trouble. Companies should be transparent and communicate well with the employees. Most of the companies, don't view this move from the government as a threat to them as they have their policies in place. Only those companies that don't have a proper system, will be penalized if they allow their employees to form union.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS & CONCLUSION

From the study it is evident that the concept of IT union is still in its infancy stage and the employees are not aware of the permission given by the labour commission of Karnataka to start trade union. The majority of Bangalore IT employees have shown willingness to join the union if given an opportunity. The employees believe that their problems can be solved by collective bargaining. However the IT employees are not confident whether their organization will permit them to join an union as this move has its own pros and cons. The employees decide to join unions based on individual factor, group factor and organizational factor that they have an advantage on. The male and female employees have same opinion on the individual factors like discrimination at work, employer pressure, not satisfied with standing orders, individual bargaining ineffective, but male and female employees differ in their opinion on group factor, i.e. unions will protecting rights & interests of employees, working conditions will improve, salary, job security, not satisfied with benefits; and organisation factor i.e., organisation is not very supportive, promotions and appraisal, unable to solve problems, laws are anti-democratic.

Most of the male employees feel that they will lose individuality, if they join union. The millennials working in the IT companies feel that management is very supportive and the unions are just interference in their work, they don't want a third party to decide their future, hence they don't want to join union.

The IT sector is mostly labour intensive, which caters to the requirements of its clients across the globe. Any sudden change in the economic and political system is going to have a adverse impact on business, which will lead to reduction in head-count in many companies. The idea of unionization among IT employees is a welcome change for a few, who seek justice. The employees as well as the employer have to test waters till they formally accept the changes.

The perception that employees have about the union can be used by the human resources managers to identify specific areas to implement support like the trust and fairness, improving working conditions, job security, etc. in the case of declining support by the employees.

SCOPE OF FURTHER STUDIES

The study is conducted on the employees working in Bengaluru IT sector. The responses given by the employees working in IT sector in Bengaluru can be biased because of several personal and professional reasons. The paper also focuses only on the reasons and perception the IT employees have about having an union in their organisation, it does not concentrate on the job attitudes which can be included in the further study. The attitudes of unionised and non-unionised employees can be further studied and based on the findings relevant recommendations can be made to the organisations as to how the employees feel and what the employees expect from the management.

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