

Empowering Change: Women's Participation and Management in Trade Unions in India

Mr. Shyamkant Madhukar Khonde^{1*}, Dr. Lata Suresh², Dr. Muktak Vyas³

¹Phd Scholar, Department of School of Management and Commerce, Poornima University Jaipur, Rajasthan, India, shyamkhonde7@gmail.com

²HoD, Department of Knowledge Management Centre, Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs, Manesar-Gurgaon, Haryana, India, 0000-0003-1521-2332, Scopus Author ID- 57191449974. suresh.lata@gmail.com

³Professor, Department: Faculty of Management and Commerce, Poornima University. Jaipur (Rajasthan), muktak.vyas@poornima.edu.in, <http://orcid.org/009-005-3319-6585>

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ABSTRACT

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The study "Empowering Change: Women's Participation in Trade Unions in India" explores how enhancing women's involvement in trade unions can empower individuals, catalyze broader societal change, and lead to more just and effective labor policies benefiting the entire nation. The study adopted a mixed-method approach to provide a comprehensive understanding of both the quantitative impact and the qualitative experiences of "women's participation in the trade union movement in India." The study used a structured questionnaire via Stratified random Sampling to select participants. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results reveal that more and more young women join the trade unions, but they also face several obstacles related to gender-based discrimination and organizational practices. Work-life balance, opportunities for leadership, and the development of skills play a crucial role in ensuring active participation by women. The study findings suggest that training and skill development have been the major drivers of improvement toward establishing and maintaining female participation, taken together, contributing uniquely to the experience of increased participation. In addition, the findings of the study highlight the need to create an enabling environment for women to participate and benefit from trade union activities to affect change at work and beyond.

Keywords: Women's Participation, Trade Unions, Labor Movements, Gender Equality, Union Effectiveness, Women's Empowerment, Union Effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

"Empowerment of women is essential as their value systems lead to the development of a good family, good society, and ultimately a good nation" A.P.J. Abdul Kalam's statement highlights the transformative power of women's empowerment, especially in labour rights. Women's active participation in trade unions is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and equitable labour movement in India (Kapoor, et. al., 2019). The study explores how enhancing women's involvement in trade unions can empower individuals, catalyze broader societal change, and lead to more just and effective labour policies benefiting the entire nation.

The trade union movement in India started in plantations, mines, railways, and factories in the British Colonial Period. Many times, women were recruited because the men wanted lower wages or there was an increased demand. The unions initially ignored the women's role in labour movements, and women joined the organisations (Sen, 2004). Strikes happened from 1920-1923 over issues such as wages, abolition of Khoraki payment, dismissal of union-connected workers, and venality of supervisors. Gradually, there was the organisation of male workers into unions, and strikes became less violent, more organised, and better led (Kesavarao, et. al., 2012). Gender was an issue that working-class unions had to grapple with also and were tough to organise. The interests of women were not perceived as different from general issues. Demand for better wages and welfare measures subsumed women also. Unions took over leadership for negotiations, and hence, 'class' demands were at the industry-wise level. Left-leaning persuasions gave birth to the Self-Employed Women's Association in Ahmedabad. The objective was to struggle for better working conditions and to cultivate honesty, dignity, and simplicity (Rohini Hensman, et. al., 2001).

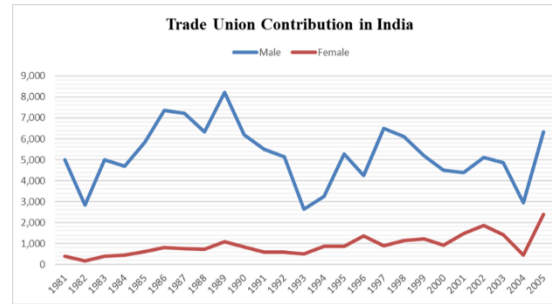


Figure 1: Contribution of Male and Female in Trade Union

Source: Self-prepared by authors

Trade Unions in India should believe that a majority of women work to support them and, therefore, normally shoulder dual responsibilities. Participation should be taken as an effort and not as a burden that would be best for dealing with the participation of women. Proper representation of women is essential to achieve social and economic development. Among the obstacles to participation include patriarchal attitudes, workplace inequality, union rules, child-inconvenienced meetings, unequal domestic responsibilities, union-child loyalties, and the non-availability of quality childcare (Maini, et. al., 2017). Indian women have always commanded respect for the work within homes, but the work outside has never been considered prestigious. The constitution does guarantee equal rights, but all social legislation, especially female empowerment, remains poorly implemented. Most organisations violate this and do away with provisions such as parental leaves and equal opportunity. Women should actively join trade unions to struggle for their rights and ensure working conditions and maternity benefits through the Factories Act of 1948 (Hensman, et. al., 2002).

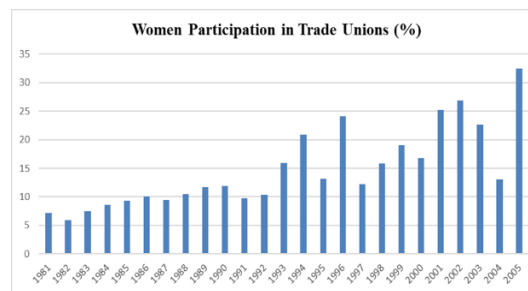


Figure 2: Women's Participation in Trade Union in India

Source: Self-prepared by authors

Socio-cultural, job-related, and union-related factors are responsible for denying women's participation in trade unions. Socio-cultural barriers are husbandly attitudes, transportation problems, and lack of childcare facilities. Job-related barriers include a lack of experience, non-challenging jobs, or fear of rivalry. Some of the union-related barriers are a lack of encouragement towards holding office and very few role models, while wage discrimination, delay in promotions, and technological retrenchment increase the necessity for women's participation in trade unions (Asan, et. al., 2023). The influence of the women's movement has resulted in new role models and leadership opportunities for union women. Unions are working toward providing childcare facilities and organising women workers. Efforts in childcare facilities and organising unorganised women workers have increased (Fine, 2006).

While women's participation in trade unions is increasing, it remains low, especially within male-dominated sectors and decision-making bodies. Women face several structural barriers to active participation, with gender-based discrimination leading the list and a lack of opportunities following as a close second. Again, women are mostly found working in less unionised sectors; therefore, their influence is constrained (Bardasi, et. al., 2008). Despite all this, there is a growing sensitivity to gender issues, and some attempts are underway to enhance "women's participation in unions," though much is to be achieved. Empowerment of "women's participation in trade unions" is related not only to gender justice but also to strengthening the labour movement in India. Women bring different perspectives to issues at the workplace, and their active participation could ensure more comprehensive, fair labour

policies (Belwal, et al., 2014). Moreover, suppose women start playing major roles in trade unions. In that case, Women will further exacerbate their influence to spark social change at larger levels by changing customary gender roles in society and advancing gender equality in all occupations. The study highlights the need to create an enabling environment for women's effective participation and benefits from trade union activities to affect change at work and beyond.

The study "Empowering Change: Women's Participation in Trade Unions in India" is vital due to ongoing gender disparities in labour representation. Despite India's strong labour movement history, women's participation in unions remains limited, often blocked by socio-cultural barriers. Previous studies, like those by Suchard et al. (1981) and Kirton (2005), have noted challenges in women's union leadership and participation but are often region-specific. The study fills the gap by examining the current level of women's participation and identifying the multiple underlying factors that impact women's participation.

Apart from the introduction, the rest of the study is structured as follows: Section 2 provides a review of previous studies on trade unions, women's participation, local dynamics, and women's livelihoods; Section 3 outlines the study's objectives; Section 4 details the research methods; Section 5 presents the results and findings; Section 6 offers the discussion; and Section 7 covers the conclusions, implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research. The article concludes with a list of references.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 *Reviews of Women's Participation in Trade Unions and Factors Influencing Women's Participation in Trade Unions.*

According to Ratnam, et. al., (2002), in India, women had minimal involvement in trade unions, but informal organisations such as workers' cooperatives and self-help groups promoted empowerment and rights. Union instrumentality modified the link between convenience and women's engagement in trade unions, demonstrating that female workers with approbation from students, companies, and close relatives had a higher propensity to actively engage in activities linked to the union (Ghosh, et. al., 2015). Sex was a crucial driver of union membership, and future research was suggested to concentrate on the organisation of unions as political institutions to promote equal involvement by women (Sutton, et. al., 1980). Economic growth in India did not have a U-shaped connection with "women's labour force participation;" rather, the composition of growth was critical for women's economic involvement (Lahoti, et. al., 2016).

According to Ray, et. al., (2019), women's unwillingness to join trade union activities in Kolkata was impacted by gender norms and the lack of formal collective bargaining processes to represent workers' interests. Higher qualifications favourably promoted "women's involvement in trade union" decision-making institutions, but the services sector and blue-collar positions had a negative effect (Blaschke, et. al., 2015). Increased labour market flexibility, infrastructural investments, and increased social expenditure were suggested to encourage female economic participation in India (Das, et. al., 2015). According to Sen, et. al., (2021), women's political involvement in Bengal's trade unions from the 1920s to the 1970s indicated a multifaceted engagement with labour politics, confronting familial and societal boundaries, and reacting to the political mainstreaming of Indian trade unions.

2.2 *Reviews on Local Market Dynamics and Trade Unions' Impact on Women's Livelihoods.*

According to Suchard, et. al. (1981), despite a favourable political atmosphere for labour organisations, women did not have the same level of engagement and leadership in trade unions as males. Trade union women's sections promoted numerous union purposes and techniques, embracing equity ideas and extending their target repertory in public and civil sectors (Parker, et al., 2006). According to Halbesleben, et. al. (2006), economic circumstances affected union membership via a variety of crucial intervening factors, with changes in these variables over the last 40 years considerably impacting the link between economics and union membership.

According to Kirton, (2005), women's union membership and involvement were impacted by gendered experiences of unions and the workplace, with feminism playing a crucial role in shaping them. Trade union heterogeneity lowered the negative employment consequences of stronger unions and may have influenced the unemployment implications of trade liberalisation (Pinto, et. al., 2019). Trade union women's organisations helped achieve a variety of union goals and used both traditional and less orthodox techniques in the quests (Parker, et. al., 2006). According to Mrozowicki, et. al., (2013), women's attempts to retake control of their working lives had the potential

to rejuvenate trade unions, but cultural and organisational constraints hindered their access to decision-making bodies. Self-organisation in trade unions may have contributed to women's identities and consciousnesses, perhaps leading to organisational challenge, change, and transformation (Colgan, et. al., 2000). Cultural norms, such as gender-related social norms, can constrain women's employment in developing countries (Jayachandran, 2020).

2.3 Review related to women's participation in trade unions on the effectiveness of union activities

According to Gray, et. al., (2001), Trade unions in Australia, Austria, Israel, and Sweden consistently backed gender equality, but the history and organisational limits have impacted their present approaches to female activity. Women's union participation necessitates difficult debates with gendered opinions and procedures, involving dedication, devotion, and considerable amounts of mental and physical labour (Franzway, et. al., 2000). According to Blaschke, et. al., (2015) Higher qualification favourably promotes women's involvement in trade union decision-making structures, but the services sector and blue-collar position have a negative effect on it. In India, women have minimal involvement in trade unions, but informal organisations such as workers' cooperatives and self-help groups promote empowerment and rights (Ratnam, et. al., 2002). According to Ghosh, et. al., (2015) Union instrumentality modifies the link between convenience and women's engagement in trade unions, demonstrating that female workers with approbation from students, businesses, and close relatives were more inclined to engage in union-related events in a supportive manner. Trade union women's sections have promoted numerous union purposes and techniques, embraced equity ideas and extended its target repertory in public and civil sectors (Parker, et. al., 2006).

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To examine the current level of women's participation in trade unions in India.
- To assess the impact of women's participation in trade unions on the effectiveness of union activities.
- To identify and measure the specific barriers that women perceive as obstacles to their participation in trade unions.
- To identify the multiple underlying factors that impact women's participation in trade in India.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- **Data Collection:** The study included multiple sources of knowledge to assess the relationship situation and psychological health at three distinct stages of the lifespan. Additionally, the study aimed to investigate when the state of relationships influenced the links. Primary information was gathered through the use of a structured questionnaire via Stratified random Sampling, while secondary information was obtained from existing literature on sustainable apparel and branding.
- **Study Area:** The study focuses on India as a whole to capture the different factors, such as diverse regional, cultural, and socio-economic factors, influencing women's participation in trade unions across the country.
- **Targeted population:** As the targeted population is undefined, the sample size has been calculated as 385 according to Cochran's formula. A sample size of 105 questionnaires was selected to further validate the reliability and accuracy aspects.
- **Research Technique:** Mixed methods have been adopted for research design. The study adopted a mixed-method approach to provide a comprehensive understanding of both the quantitative impact and the qualitative experiences of "women's participation in trade unions in India."
- **Data Extraction:** The data has undergone analysis using the SPSS 26 and Excel software. SPSS enables advanced statistical analysis and detailed data modelling, while MS Excel provides essential tools for data organization and basic calculations, making them complementary tools for efficient and accurate data processing. The study used a structured questionnaire via Stratified random Sampling to select participants.
- **Study Technique:** The study used Mean, Standard deviation, MANOVA (Multivariate Analysis of Variance), Factor analysis, and Regression to test the study's hypothesis. A pilot study was conducted to ensure the

questionnaire's reliability and accuracy.

RESULT

This section comprises the findings and interpretation of the data. The demographic characteristics and objectives, as well as hypotheses, have been used to categorise the outcomes. The aims and hypotheses include a table displaying the results and an explanation of those results.

Table 1: Reliability and Validity Statistics

| Reliability Statistics | | | | |
|--|------------------|------------|--------------------------|------------|
| Label | Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items | KMO and Bartlett's value | Sig. value |
| Women's Participation in trade unions | .713 | 4 | .716 | .000 |
| Effectiveness of union activities | .716 | 3 | .651 | .000 |
| Cultural Norms | .724 | 4 | .731 | .000 |
| Organisational Structures | .710 | 3 | .651 | .000 |
| Work-life balance | .733 | 3 | .676 | .000 |
| Availability of leadership opportunities | .728 | 3 | .677 | .000 |
| Training and skill development programs | .753 | 3 | .692 | .000 |

Table 1 shows the reliability statistics of various variables. Cronbach's Alpha ranges from 0.710 to 0.753, thus indicating the reliability of the questionnaire as the values are more than 0.700. Items range from 3 under "Effectiveness of union activities", "Organizational Structures," "Work-life balance", "Availability of leadership opportunities", and "Training and Skill Development Programs" to 4 under "Women's Participation in Trade Unions" and "Cultural Norms" The KMO values suggest that the validity of the questionnaire has been established because all values are above 0.600, thus the data is suitable for factor analysis. All the significance values are 0.000, thus the results are statistically significant.

Table 2: The Respondents' Demographic Profile

| Sr. no. | Demographic characteristics | category | N | % |
|---------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-----|-------|
| 1. | Age | Below 20 Years old | 85 | 22.1% |
| | | 20-35 Years old | 125 | 32.5% |
| | | 35-50 Years old | 101 | 26.2% |
| | | Above 50 Years old | 74 | 19.2% |
| 2. | Educational Background | Secondary Education | 54 | 14.0% |
| | | Higher Secondary Education | 57 | 14.8% |
| | | Graduation | 94 | 24.4% |
| | | Post Graduation | 119 | 30.9% |
| | | Doctoral | 61 | 15.8% |
| 3. | Location | Rural | 136 | 35.3% |

| | | | | |
|----|----------------|-----------|-----|-------|
| | | Urban | 249 | 64.7% |
| 4. | Marital Status | Married | 202 | 52.5% |
| | | Unmarried | 183 | 47.5% |

Table 2 displays the “Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents” in terms of their age, educational background, location, and marital status. As per Table 2, most of the participants were between the ages of 20 and 35, accounting for 32.5% of the total. The majority of respondents were highly educated post-graduation, i.e., 30.9%. The majority of respondents were located in urban areas, i.e., 64.7%. The majority of responders were married, accounting for 55.0% of the total.

5.1. Results based on Hypotheses:

“H1: Women’s active participation in trade unions significantly enhances the effectiveness of union activities.”

Table 3: Regression Test Table

| | Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | t | Sig. |
|---|---------------------------------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|--------|-------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 23.668 | 1 | 23.668 | 3.961 | .101 ^a | .010 | .008 | | .047 ^b |
| | Residual | 2288.347 | 383 | 5.975 | | | | | | |
| | (Constant) | | | | | | | | 14.280 | |
| | Women's Participation in trade unions | | | | | | | | 1.990 | .047 |
| | Total | 2312.016 | 384 | | | | | | | |
| a. Dependent Variable: Effectiveness of union activities | | | | | | | | | | |
| b. Predictors: (Constant) Women's Participation in trade unions | | | | | | | | | | |

Table 3 shows that the hypothesis to be tested by regression analysis is that "women's active participation in trade unions significantly enhances the effectiveness of union activities". In this model, the F-value of 3.961 was significant at 0.047, indicating that an association existed between women's participation and the effectiveness of union activities, although the effect size was small, yet statistically significant, with $R^2 = 0.010$. This would tend to indicate that, although there is a positive influence from participation by women regarding the effectiveness of union activities. The positive t-value 1.990 reinforces this notion that more participation by women is correlated with higher effectiveness in union activities. Hence, the hypothesis is accepted by the data.

H2: Women perceive cultural norms and organisational structures as significant barriers to their participation in trade unions.

Table 4: MANOVA Table

| Source and Parameter | N | “Mean” | ‘Std. Deviation’ | Type III Sum of Squares | ‘df’ | “Mean Square” | ‘F’ | t | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval (Lower) | 95% Confidence Interval (Upper) |
|---------------------------------------|-----|---------|------------------|-------------------------|------|---------------|-----|---|------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Women's Participation in trade unions | 385 | 14.2961 | 2.80264 | | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|----------------------|-----|----------|---------|--------|------|--------|--------|
| Corrected Model | | | | 147.635 ^a | 2 | 73.818 | 9.830 | | .000 | | |
| Intercept | | | | 1985.700 | 1 | 1985.700 | 264.427 | 16.261 | .000 | 13.314 | 16.976 |
| Cultural Norms | | | | 36.486 | 1 | 36.486 | 4.859 | 2.204 | .028 | .011 | .194 |
| Organisational Structures | | | | 102.443 | 1 | 102.443 | 13.642 | -3.694 | .000 | -.324 | -.099 |
| Error | | | | 2868.609 | 382 | 7.509 | | | | | |
| Total | | | | 81702.000 | 385 | | | | | | |
| Corrected Total | | | | 3016.244 | 384 | | | | | | |
| a. R Squared = .049 (Adjusted R Squared = .044) | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Dependent Variable: Women's Participation in trade unions | | | | | | | | | | | |

Table 4 reveals that cultural norms and organisational structures are seen by women as a major barrier to their trade union participation. With a mean of 14.2961 and a standard deviation of 2.80264, there is an indication that, generally, the respondents agree. The corresponding significant F-values on cultural norms, $F = 4.859$, $p = .028$, and organisational structures, $F = 13.642$, $p = .000$, reveal that these factors notably affect women's participation. The negative t-value for organisational structures (-3.694 , $p = .000$) points towards a strong negative correlation, hence suggesting that the more rigid the organisational structures, the greater the damping effect on "women's involvement in trade unions." An R-square value of .049 indicates that about 4.9% of the variation in "women's participation in trade unions" can be explained by these two factors. These findings, overall, validate that it is both the cultural and organisational structures that remain critical to women's active participation in trade unions.

H3: The multiple underlying factors enhance women's participation in the trade in India

"Table 5: KMO and Bartlett's Test Table"

| "KMO and Bartlett's Test" | | |
|--|----------------------|---------|
| "Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy." | | .625 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | "Approx. Chi-Square" | 688.739 |
| | "Df" | 36 |
| | "Sig." | .000 |

Table 5 shows KMO and Bartlett's Test where the value of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy is 0.625, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity result was significant with the approximate Chi-Square value at 688.739, $df = 36$, and p -value = 0.000. Therefore, these results for KMO and Bartlett's Test undoubtedly justify the suitability of data for factor analysis of the hypothesis.

Table 6: Communalities Table

| "Communalities" | | |
|-----------------|-----------|--------------|
| | "Initial" | "Extraction" |
| WLB1 | 1.000 | .577 |
| WLB2 | 1.000 | .684 |
| WLB3 | 1.000 | .546 |
| ALO1 | 1.000 | .613 |
| ALO2 | 1.000 | .595 |
| ALO3 | 1.000 | .622 |

| | | |
|--|-------|------|
| TSD1 | 1.000 | .737 |
| TSD2 | 1.000 | .635 |
| TSD3 | 1.000 | .663 |
| “Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.” | | |

Table 6 of communalities for different factors that enhance the participation of women in trade unions in India, extracted by Principal Component Analysis. The community measures the proportion of variance in each variable accounted for by the extracted components. The values range from .546 to .737, showing that these underlying components represent the factors of work-life balance (WLB), availability of leadership opportunities (ALO), and training and skill development (TSD) well. In this regard, TSD1 has the highest extraction value of .737, indicating that training and skill development bear the highest relevance in the enhancement of women's participation. Similarly, the communalities for work-life balance (WLB) and availability of leadership opportunities (ALO) are also giving quite high contributions with values greater than .546. It infers that several underlying factors relating to work-life balance, opportunities for leadership, and the development of skills play a crucial role in ensuring active participation by women in the trade unions of India.

Table 7: Total Variance Explained Table

| “Total Variance Explained” | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Component | “Initial Eigenvalues” | | | “Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings” | | | “Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings” | | |
| | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % |
| 1 | 2.142 | 23.803 | 23.803 | 2.142 | 23.803 | 23.803 | 1.958 | 21.755 | 21.755 |
| 2 | 1.850 | 20.555 | 44.357 | 1.850 | 20.555 | 44.357 | 1.870 | 20.780 | 42.535 |
| 3 | 1.680 | 18.671 | 63.028 | 1.680 | 18.671 | 63.028 | 1.844 | 20.493 | 63.028 |
| 4 | .793 | 8.806 | 71.834 | | | | | | |
| 5 | .602 | 6.686 | 78.520 | | | | | | |
| 6 | .594 | 6.596 | 85.116 | | | | | | |
| 7 | .513 | 5.697 | 90.814 | | | | | | |
| 8 | .457 | 5.076 | 95.890 | | | | | | |
| 9 | .370 | 4.110 | 100.000 | | | | | | |
| Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. | | | | | | | | | |

Table 7 presents the three most important factors for the variance of “women's participation in trade unions in India,” which cumulatively explains 63.028%. The first component explains 23.803% of the variance, the second 20.555%, and the third 18.671%. These factors, after rotation, remained significant, with the first factor slightly dropping to 21.755%, the second factor increasing to 20.78%, and the third increasing slightly to 20.493%. This is important in showing that some varied underlying factors considerably enhance “women's participation in trade unions.” The explained variances of the following components decrease—that is; all under 10 suggested additional factors have somewhat diminished effects. Overall, the results have brought out that a combination of all these three prime factors contributes immensely to motivating women to actively participate in the trade union movement in India.

Table 8: Rotated Component Matrix Table

| Rotated Component Matrix^a | | | |
|---|-----------|------|------|
| | Component | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| WLB1 | | | .759 |
| WLB2 | .825 | | |
| WLB3 | | .734 | |
| ALO1 | .781 | | |
| ALO2 | | .768 | |
| ALO3 | | | .787 |
| TSD1 | | .857 | |
| TSD2 | | | .796 |
| TSD3 | .812 | | |
| “Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.” | | | |
| a. “Rotation converged in 4 iterations.” | | | |

Above table 8, revealed that underlying factors enhance the identification of three distinct components for women participation in trade unions in India: work-life balance, availability of leadership opportunities, and training and skill development. Each factor tends to have a very high loading on a particular factor, which marks its importance in promoting women's participation. Items dealing with work-life balance load highly on Components 1 and 2, with WLB2 having the highest loading on Component 1 at .825. Those relating to the availability of leadership opportunities load highly on Components 1 and 3, with ALO1 loading on Component 1 at .781. Items dealing with training and skill development are loaded highly on Component 2, with TSD1 loading on it at .857. It argues that, from the results, work-life balance, leadership opportunities, and training have been the major drivers of improvement toward establishing and maintaining women's participation in trade unions, taken together, contributing uniquely to the experience of increased participation.

DISCUSSION

The study on "Empowering Change: Women's Participation in Trade Unions in India", brings forth a cogent analysis of the factors that weave into the trend in the participation of women in trade unions. Although women's participation in trade unions has been impressive overall, in sectors and leadership positions where males have dominated for a long time, it still stands at relatively low numbers. As the data indicates, while more young women are entering into trade unions, their presence still lags far behind that of males. This disparity reflects deep-seated societal norms and organisational practices that have conventionally marginalised women within labour movements. The influence of women's participation in impacting union effectiveness is great but modest. Hence, regression analysis points out that the greater involvement of women would contribute to the effectiveness of union operations due to different viewpoints and approaches. As can be seen, the effect size is nonetheless small, indicating that it is not women's participation in and of itself that explains union effectiveness but other organisational factors and dynamics.

The barriers to participation by women in trade unions are numerous and engrained in both cultural and organisational aspects (Greene, et. al., 2003). The study indicates that gender biases and rigid policies tend to be most inhibiting, implying that culturally defined gender roles prevail, as do non-representative practices that prevent the full participation of women. Changing these practices will require a broad-based strategy for changing attitudes in society and reforming union structures to make them more representative. The study further underlines several factors that may constitute women's participation balance, leadership opportunities, and

training programs. Of these, it looks like training and skill development remain two of the most influential determinants that have brought more and more women into the fold, which goes to say that once women are given the right kind of skills and opportunities, their contribution will be manifold. Work-life balance and leadership opportunities round out some key issues that are both practical and motivational in the standing of women's involvement in union activities (Roebuck, et. al., 2017).

Ratnam, et. al., (2002) provided a historical perspective on women's roles in trade unions, highlighting broad trends over time but lacking a focus on current barriers and opportunities. The present study addresses this gap by offering a detailed examination of contemporary challenges and opportunities in women's participation in trade unions in India. Sen, (2021) explored broad trends in women's engagement in labour movements but did not delve deeply into the specific factors affecting women's participation today. In contrast, the present study investigates how recent policy changes and socio-economic shifts directly influence women's engagement in trade unions, offering a more nuanced and current analysis.

Lahoti, et. al., (2016) examined the economic and sector-specific factors impacting women's labour force participation in India, focusing on broader economic influences. The present study expands on this by integrating contemporary data and providing actionable recommendations for enhancing women's roles and leadership within trade unions. Blaschke, et. al., (2015) focused on trade union transformations globally but did not specifically address the unique context of women's participation in Indian trade unions. The present study fills this gap by highlighting the structural and cultural barriers to women's participation in trade unions in India, suggesting specific strategies to overcome these challenges and enhance inclusivity.

The findings have very wide implications for both trade unions and policymakers. For example, if unions want to see more women participate, they will have to tackle the identified structural and cultural barriers. This means supportive policy adoption, training, and development programs and creating an enabling environment that challenges traditional gender roles. Further research on regional variations and socio-economic contexts that shape the nature of "women's participation within trade unions" is also recommended. These findings from the study reiterate that a rise in the participation of women is the sine qua non for attaining equality between genders and a strong labour movement. Full participation by women could mean the establishment of more inclusive and equitable labour policies in the interest of the general workforce. Empowering women through trade unions can bring in wider social change and thus contribute to an equitable and just labour scenario in India.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, the study "Empowering Change: Women's Participation in Trade Unions in India" brings to the fore that the effectiveness and inclusiveness of trade unions depend a great deal on women's involvement. While there is a significant increase in their membership, serious barriers persist that impede participation by women, especially at the leadership levels. The findings suggest that as female members have a positive influence on the effectiveness of trade unions, further and deeper structural changes are needed in order for trade unions to better exploit the potential of their women members. On the one hand, this research provides proof that more and more young women join trade unions, but they also face several obstacles related to gender-based discrimination and organisational practices. These challenges obstruct their active participation and thus decrease the general value of their contributions. In this regard, trade unions should be more inclusive in their practices, introduce supportive policies, and provide relevant training programs that enhance women's skills and leadership.

Furthermore, the study emphasises that though training and skill development a strong driver for increasing female participation, other factors impacting females' inclusiveness in the organisation relate to work-life balance and access to leadership roles. Trade unions are able to construct a supportive environment whereby increased female participation can be built upon in terms of gender equity. Therefore, places the onus on the trade unions and the policymakers to work together in overcoming these barriers. Reforms intended to include women and promote their status within the trade unions will ensure a more representative and efficient labour movement. Further, such a labour movement can ensure larger social changes, improving gender equality and the overall labour scenario in India. Conclusively, the study findings are informative and provide a useful grounding for further research on women's empowerment and improvements in union practices.

The study has thrown light upon the pivotal role played by women in Indian trade unions and how their participation may bring a transformational effect not only in workplaces but also in society. Effective involvement

in interest representation could enable trade unions to comprehensively voice the interests and concerns of all types of workers, thereby making their policies and practices more representative regarding issues such as workplace harassment, equal pay, and pregnancy benefits. It further underlines the fact that organisational and social support increases active women's participation in trade unions; where such support becomes stronger, the voice of women gets louder, hence helping to create a more equitable labour movement.

Thus, study is not devoid of its limitations. The data are considerably from a few participants and thus may not represent other women who take part in various trade unions across India comprehensively. On the other hand, the present study was geographically specific; therefore, generalising these findings to other areas of the country with varying socio-economic conditions may be limited. Another relevant bias might be reliance on self-reported data, given that conscious or unconscious underreporting or overreporting of experiences may thus occur. Because the socio-political context is changing fast in India, it could affect women's participation in trade unions over time, which has not been taken into consideration in the study.

In fact, further research in this direction may be conducted on aspects influencing women's participation in trade unions in a more comprehensive manner across regions and industries in India. Longitudinal data could also be considered for such studies in order to learn how changes in legislation, economic conditions, and social norms shape women's involvement over time. Furthermore, specific research may delineate how digital platforms are facilitating women's access to and agency in trade unions within an emerging recent trend of technology uses in the labor movement. The intersectionality of caste, religion, and socioeconomic status issues in studies will shed light on other challenges and opportunities faced by women in trade unions.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

We wish to confirm that there are no known conflicts of interest associated with this publication, and there has been no significant financial support for this work that could have influenced its outcome.

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