

Role of Demographics in Employee Strike Propensity among Labour Union Members

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Abstract- Strike propensity is a covert behaviour where the employees exhibit their willingness or readiness to engage in a strike with the goals articulated by the union. A strike is used as a weapon of negotiation, wherein the employees not only exhibit a discrepancy between the objectives of the organization/ government and their aspirations but also deny to work which leads to a huge loss to the organization/ government, in addition collectively bargain and demand to settle their grievances. Identifying the strike propensity among the employees and addressing their grievances before it eventually happens subsequently will prevent the organization from a huge loss. Literature indicates that one's gender, age, residential status, and educational qualification has a role in shaping one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Hence, this article explores the demographics of the labour union members who are prone to strikes.

Keywords: Collective bargaining, Grievances, Labour unions, Negotiation, Strike, Strike Propensity

I. INTRODUCTION

Based on the economic development and Gross Domestic Productivity (GDP), nations are categorized into developed nations, developing nations, and under-developed nations. A nation's economic success is measured in terms of its GDP growth, which is calculated on the basis of industrial growth especially the production of goods and services. The success and failure of an industry depends on the nature of its human resource. A healthy relationship between the employees and the management results in the peace and harmony of the organization and eventually contributes to the industrial as well as the economic development of a nation. A strike, additionally referred to as labour strike or industrial action, is a work stoppage resulting from the employees' mass refusal to work. A strike is an action that usually takes place in response to the employees' grievances [1]. Usually, labour unions promote collective bargaining and strike among their members because they consider it as a powerful weapon of negotiation [2]. When collective bargaining or negotiation fails, the consequence can be as devastating as a strike. Labour unions or trade unions consider strike as their need gratifying tool for negotiation, to achieve their needs and demands from the management/ government [3]. Trade unionism can bring in several changes in the nation's economic as well as political scenario [4]. Strikes create huge loss to the organizations as well as to the nation. A strike is a requisite of the labour union activities only when both parties fail to reach a collective agreement. Labour unions consider a strike as a need gratifying instrument for their members to settle their demands, needs, and grievances with their management [5]. Strike propensity is distinct from actual strike behavior but it is a strong antecedent of it [6]. Strike propensity is the root cause of the strike. Strike propensity predicts the strike in advance. There is an element of warning found in each strike when an attempt is made to pressurize the management to negotiate and settle the problems at hand [7]. The members' willingness to participate in strikes determines the success and failure of every strike [8]. The social-background model suggested that the male employees who were older and senior-most showed willingness to engage in a strike in support of the union for a 10 percent of the wage increase, while the employees who were younger and less senior showed willingness to engage in a strike for 24 percent of the wage increase [9].

1.2. Need and Scope

Employee strike propensity helps the management to identify the strike in advance. A strike is an overt expression of industrial conflict; which is particularly widespread in Kerala. Out of all the states in India, Kerala has witnessed the largest number of strikes consistently every year. Strikes have become a part and parcel of common man's life, in Kerala. A total number of 97 strikes happened in the year 2018, [10], causing economic stagnation, loss of money, and sabotage of development. According to K Venugopal, a political and social activist, and communist thinker from the state of Kerala, a cent percent successful strike in a day can cause a loss of around Rs 900 crore in the overall GDP of Kerala [11]. In Kerala, labour unions are more actively engaged in strikes to fulfill their demands; which make it necessary to study the strike culture among these labour union members and delve into their socio-demographic variables. Lack of recent research in the Indian context necessitated the researchers to conduct a survey that primarily focused on the socio-demographic aspect of employees' strike propensity.

II. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aim

The aim is to understand employee strike propensity among labour union through their demographic background.

2.2 Objectives

The prime objective of the study is to investigate the employee strike propensity among labour union members in the various organizations of Ernakulum District, in Kerala. The specific objectives of the study are:

- To measure employee strike propensity among labour union members exclusively in the context of Kerala.
- To assess the strike propensity of labour union members with regard to the socio-demographic background.

2.3 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated based on the objectives of the present study:

H₁: There will not be any significant difference in Employee Strike Propensity among labour union members based on gender.

H₂: There will not be any significant difference in Employee Strike Propensity among labour union members with regard to their age group.

H₃: There will not be any significant difference in Employee Strike Propensity among labour union members with regard to the area of residence.

H₄: There will not be any significant difference in Employee Strike Propensity among labour union members with respect to their educational qualification.

2.4 Tools

Employee Strike Propensity Scale developed by Amal and Jayakumar [12] was used. Employee Strike Propensity Scale consists of 24 items with responses on a five-point Likert scale viz 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Undecided, 4= Agree, and 5= Strongly Agree. The Cronbach's alpha is found to be 0.74 and the Split-half reliability is 0.79. A moderate r-value of 0.55 was obtained with the Participatory Behaviour Scale indicating a moderate concurrent validity.

2.5 Sample and Procedure

A total of 307 labour union members participated in the present study. The participants were selected from various organizations in and around Ernakulum District of Kerala State, India. The participants were asked to fill the questionnaire with their genuine responses. A total of 307 participants responded to the questionnaire. Out of which 270 data were selected for the final analysis after eliminating incomplete data and outliers.

2.5 Statistical Test

The SPSS 21.0 version was used to analyze the collected data. After checking for the normality of the distribution, the data was statistically analyzed. Mean, standard deviation, t-test and ANOVA were used to find the difference between the mean groups.

2.6 Normality and Homogeneity of variance

Normality of the data was extensively evaluated based on the skewness and kurtosis value. The skewness value is found to be -1.91 and the kurtosis value is found to be -0.35. The skewness should be less than 3 and kurtosis value should be less than 10 [13]. The skewness and kurtosis values indicate that the data collected for the study is normally distributed. The Levene's Test for Equality of Variances indicates the homogeneity of variance. The test helps to find out whether the groups compared have some variance. The F-value obtained from the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances for the gender, age group, area of residence and educational qualification are found to be 0.05, 7.29, 1.70, 2.56 ($p > 0.05$) respectively. As the p-value is greater than 0.05, group variance is assumed to be equal.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1

Shows the difference in Employee Strike Propensity among labour union members with regard to gender.

Variable	Male		Female		t-value
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	
Employee Strike Propensity	85.54	8.91	84.32	10.04	0.61 ^{NS}

NS- Not significant at 0.05 level

H₁: There will not be any significant difference in Employee Strike Propensity among labour union

members with regard to gender. No significant difference in Employee Strike Propensity is observed between males and females. Hence, the hypothesis is confirmed.

From table 1, it is evident that there is a significant difference in employee strike propensity among labour union members with regard to gender. The above result indicate that male union members showed higher employee strike propensity when compared to female employees ($t=0.61$, $p < 0.05$).

With advancement in technology, education, and social awareness progress has been made in terms of narrowing the barriers to gender equality. Both men and women have equal opportunity to interact with their family, society, and politics. The governance is enriched when women are seen as equals and given equal duties and responsibilities in the family as the men in the society. Nowadays, gender roles play lesser significance in organizational, social and political context as knowledge, skill and productivity is of prime importance to sustain the organizational competition. Even though no significant difference was observed in Employee Strike Propensity between the genders, the mean score indicates that males score slightly higher than females with regard to strike propensity. This is in line with the findings of [9] who argued that the male employees are more participative in union activities and showed more propensities to engage in strike compared to the female employees.

Table 2 Shows the difference in Employee Strike Propensity among labour union members with regard to their age group.

Variable	19-40 (Age group)		41-65 (Age group)		t- value
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	
Employee Strike Propensity	86.84	8.07	83.59	9.82	2.98*

*significant at 0.05 level

H₂: There will not be any significant difference in Employee Strike Propensity among labour union members with regard to their age group. A significant difference in Employee Strike Propensity is observed between their age groups. Hence, the hypothesis is not confirmed.

From table 2, it is observed that there is a significant difference in employee strike propensity among labour union members with regard to their age groups. The above result reflects that labour union members who belong to the age group of 19-40 (early adulthood) showed higher employee strike propensity when compared to the employees of age group of 41-65 (middle adulthood) ($t=2.98$, $p < 0.05$).

Employees who belong to the age group between 19 and 40 (early adulthood) show high strike propensity as they are in their young adulthood. Young adults are full of zest and zeal making them highly active and less subjected to diseases whereas middle-aged adults are the aging workforce, mostly preoccupied with their physical ailments. This data corresponds with the findings of [14] research which suggests that there is a positive correlation between age and absenteeism, for example general deterioration of health and more proneness to long-term illnesses. Middle-aged adults tend to get deflected from workplace-related issues and preoccupied with their physical and mental well-being which perhaps explains their low scores in strike prone behavior. [9] also presents strong evidence to suggest that younger employees showed more propensities to engage in strikes especially for an increase in their wages and other benefits when compared to senior employees.

Table 3 Shows the difference in Employee Strike Propensity among labour union members with regard to the area of residence

Variable	Rural		Urban		Semi-urban		F-value
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	
Employee Strike Propensity	84.91	8.11	88.50	10.53	84.48	9.90	3.30*

*significant at 0.05 level

H₃: There will not be any significant difference in Employee Strike Propensity among labour union members with regard to their area of residence. A significant difference in Employee Strike Propensity is observed between the members from rural, urban and semi-urban areas of residence. Hence, the hypothesis is not confirmed.

From table 3, it is apparent that there is a significant difference in employee strike propensity among labour union members with regard to the area of residence. On comparing, the labour union members from urban areas showed higher employee strike propensity than the rural areas and semi-urban areas ($F=3.30$, $p < 0.05$).

The higher strike propensity among urbanites of Kerala may be due to the fact that they are more aware of their rights, being exposed to technology and media which provides them with better knowledge about the exploitation of employees in their workplace or organization. Moreover, Kerala laborers have a high standard of living and like to maintain an adequate social, economic and psychological environment around [15]. Hence strikes are called for to achieve this motive, which develops a favorable attitude towards the strike and prompts them to take a supportive or participative stand.

Table 4 shows the difference in Employee Strike Propensity among labour union members with regard to their educational qualification.

*Significant at 0.05 level

Variable	Up to 10th		Diploma		Higher Secondary		Degree and Above		F-value
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	
Employee Strike Propensity	80.96	9.56	87.24	7.88	86.26	10.32	86.36	7.92	8.13*

H₄: There will not be any significant difference between Employee Strike Propensity among labour union members with regard to their educational qualification. A significant difference in Employee Strike Propensity is observed based on their educational qualification. Hence, the hypothesis is not confirmed.

The above result indicates that labour union members with diploma showed higher employee strike propensity (87.24) followed by degree holders (86.36) and higher secondary qualified employees (86.26) and up to tenth qualified employees showed the least strike propensity of 80.96. F-value of 8.13 ($p < 0.05$) suggests a significant difference among the groups based on educational qualification.

High levels of education of the participants' is related to various positive outcomes such as better health and well-being, higher social trust, greater political interests, lower political cynicism, and less hostile attitude towards immigrants [16]. The results suggest that education provides confidence in the workplace as well as the reassurance of finding another profession even when they leave the present one, which is perhaps why employees with higher education show a higher inclination to engage in a strike. Further, employees with lower education have an apprehension of being easily replaced by new employees who are better qualified and skilled which would have kept them away from showing strike prone tendencies.

Limitation

There is a high chance for social desirability bias in the present study as the researcher used self-report questionnaire collect data.

CONCLUSION

Understanding the employees' strike propensity would help the management or the employers to address them by improving the facilities that would satisfy their needs, demands and grievances in advance, before it takes the form of a strike. Ultimately, this helps the organization to develop holistically by avoiding huge economic loss and resulting in streamlined production of goods and services [12].

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