

“The role of trade union in employees satisfaction: A case study of KSRTC DEPOT Sulthan Bathery”

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of trade unions on employee satisfaction at the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) Sulthan Bathery Depot. It highlights the critical role of trade unions in advocating for workers' rights, improving working conditions, and addressing grievances. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining primary data from a survey of 92 employees with secondary sources. The findings indicate a diverse range of opinions regarding the effectiveness of unions, revealing that while many employees view unions positively in terms of workload management and timely wage payments, scepticism remains regarding their overall impact on job satisfaction. A Chi-square analysis confirms a significant relationship between trade union activities and employee satisfaction. Recommendations include enhancing educational initiatives, fostering better communication between unions and management, and prioritizing the welfare of all employee categories. The study underscores the importance of trade unions in promoting a supportive work environment, emphasizing the need for continual adaptation to meet the evolving needs of the workforce.

INTRODUCTION

Trade Unions in India have played a crucial role in settling industrial disputes, representing both workers' and employers' interests. Historically, the trade union movement began with the factory

system in India, leading to the formation of the first unions by 1920. Key unions include the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS), and Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS). These unions aim to secure better wages, improve working conditions, protect workers' rights, and maintain industrial peace. Kerala has a strong trade union presence, particularly in the transport sector through the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC), where unions have influenced labour-management relations. Trade Unions not only protect workers' rights but also contribute to employee satisfaction, which is essential for enhancing productivity and overall organizational success.

The employment conditions of KSRTC (Kerala State Road Transport Corporation) workers in Kerala are shaped by various factors, including government policies, union activities, and operational challenges. KSRTC employs workers in diverse roles such as drivers, conductors, clerks, mechanics, station masters, and sweepers, each critical to its operations. Employees are classified as permanent, contract, or casual, with permanent employees enjoying better job security and benefits, while contract and casual workers face job insecurity and fewer benefits. KSRTC's wage structure is based on roles and seniority, but in recent years, financial difficulties have led to salary delays, particularly affecting casual and contract workers. Long working hours, especially for drivers and conductors, often extend beyond eight hours without adequate rest, raising concerns about worker welfare. Unions play a crucial role in advocating for better wages, job security, and benefits like pensions, health insurance, and dearness allowance, though disputes between unions and management frequently lead to strikes and service disruptions. While permanent employees enjoy pension benefits, financial instability has resulted in delayed pension payments and irregular salaries.

Working conditions in depots and garages are often challenging, particularly for maintenance staff, who face hazardous environments and insufficient safety measures. Grievances related to wages, working conditions, and delayed payments are common, with room for improvement in grievance redressal processes. Ongoing financial struggles, including delayed disbursement of salaries and arrears, have

created uncertainty for employees, especially contract and casual workers. The government has introduced reforms aimed at improving KSRTC's financial viability through measures like voluntary retirement schemes and operational restructuring, but these have been met with both support and resistance from workers and unions. Overall, while unions have been instrumental in advocating for workers' rights, financial challenges continue to impact job security, wages, and working conditions, leaving many workers uncertain about their future in KSRTC.

Several studies highlight key aspects of employment satisfaction in the context of public transportation organizations. Dr. K Saravana (2016) focused on KSRTC passengers' satisfaction, pointing out that factors like bus fares, timeliness, employee behavior, and service quality outside Kerala affect overall satisfaction. Parvathy R Nair (2019) examined absenteeism and its impact on work performance, suggesting that management style changes could reduce absenteeism and improve satisfaction. Lekshmy SN and Dr. P Devakumar (2017) explored job satisfaction among female conductors in KSRTC, emphasizing the need for organizational commitment to address turnover and improve employee retention.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study examines the role of Trade Unions in employee satisfaction at KSRTC's Sulthan Bathery Depot. It identifies programs and policies that enhance worker satisfaction and provides a comprehensive reference for future research on the relationship between unionism and employees, addressing gaps in previous unidimensional studies.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are to examine the role of trade unions in enhancing employee satisfaction and to identify the contributions made by trade unions for the welfare of employees. Additionally, the research aims to assess the effectiveness of union initiatives in addressing worker grievances and improving working conditions. By analyzing the interplay between trade union activities and employee morale, this study seeks to provide insights into how unions can further support and advocate for their members' needs and interests.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological frame work of this study comprised both primary data and secondary data. The primary data contains a field survey with a pre- determined questionnaire. The data collected by taking 92 households from the study area, and the questions are in the line with the objectives of the study. The study also makes use of secondary data. These data has been collected from various sources like Journals, Medias, and Websites etc. The collected data are analysed and depicted through various statistical tools like tables, diagrams, percentage, and appropriate testing methods. For testing the hypothesis here using Chi-square test.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study on the satisfaction of workers at KSRTC Sulthan Bathery Depot reveals insightful findings about the gender distribution, educational background, job roles, membership tenure, and opinions on the role of trade unions. Out of 92 respondents, 46.7% identified as female and 53.3% as male, showing a slight predominance of male participants in the sample. Educational attainment among the respondents varied significantly, with 19.5% holding a diploma, 16.3% being graduates, and 19.6% having pursued postgraduate studies. A notable percentage had completed "Plus Two" (20.7%) and SSLC (21.7%), showcasing a diverse range of educational backgrounds.

In terms of roles within the organization, clerks made up 13% of the workforce, conductors 14%, drivers 9%, mechanics 13%, peons 9%, station masters 12%, storekeepers 12%, superintendent officers 15%, and sweepers 2.17%. Each category plays an essential role in the overall functioning of the depot.

Membership in the trade union showed a broad range of tenure, with 34% of respondents being members for less than one year, 32.6% for less than five years, and 32.6% for more than five years. This indicates a diverse range of union membership duration among the workers. Regarding employment type, 17.39% of respondents were casual labourers, 28.2% held contract positions, 32% were permanent full-time employees, and 22% were permanent part-time employees.

The survey also examined union membership fees, with 65.2% of respondents indicating that their union required a membership fee, while 34.8% reported no fee. When asked about the union's stance on strikes, 55.4% believed that the union supports strikes, while 44.6% disagreed, indicating a divided opinion among the workers.

Regarding trade union support for workers' interests, 55.4% believed unions serve this purpose, while 44.6% disagreed. Satisfaction with the role of unions in improving working conditions also showed mixed results, with 30.4% of respondents either highly satisfied or satisfied, while 13% expressed dissatisfaction. A substantial 21.7% remained neutral, reflecting varying levels of engagement with union activities.

Perceptions of the union's role in handling grievances also varied. While 21.7% were highly satisfied, a significant portion (28.3%) remained neutral, and 22.8% expressed satisfaction. Respondents were divided on unions' role in ensuring timely wage payments, with 29.3% satisfied, 14.1% highly satisfied, and a notable 18.5% highly dissatisfied.

The study also found mixed opinions on unions' role in ensuring gender justice, handling employee transfers, and disbursing dearness allowances, with varying levels of agreement, disagreement, and neutrality. Overall, the findings show a diverse range of opinions regarding trade union effectiveness, with a majority viewing their efforts positively while some workers remain skeptical.

THE ROLE OF TRADE UNIONS IN EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

The relationship between trade unions and employee satisfaction is a critical area of study, particularly within organizations like the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC). This study aims to examine this relationship and assess how trade unions contribute to the overall satisfaction of their members. To guide this inquiry, a null hypothesis (H₀) was established: There is no significant relationship between the statistical level and the role played by the trade union.

To evaluate the hypothesis, a Chi-square analysis was conducted, focusing on various aspects of trade union activities that relate to employee satisfaction. The findings from this analysis are presented in the table below:

Table 1

Trade union activities relate to employee satisfaction

	Pearson's Value	Likelihood Ratio	DF	P Value	Number of Valid Cases
Trade union in the allotment of workload	136.737	113.692	45	<.001	92
Trade union in improvement of working conditions	161.169	108.610	45	<.001	92
Trade union in the payment of wages and salary on time	171.674	144.243	45	<.001	92
Trade union in grievances handling	174.939	112.349	45	<.001	92

Source: Computed data

The Chi-square analysis provides significant insights into the role of trade unions in enhancing employee satisfaction. First, the analysis reveals a strong relationship between the trade union's involvement in workload distribution and employee satisfaction, as indicated by a Pearson's value of 136.737 and a p-value of less than 0.001. This underscores the union's crucial role in ensuring equitable allocation of tasks among members. Additionally, the findings highlight a statistically significant association between trade union initiatives aimed at improving working conditions and employee satisfaction, demonstrated by a Pearson's value of 161.169 and a similarly low p-value. The analysis also shows a robust link between the timely payment of wages, facilitated by the trade union, and overall employee satisfaction, with a Pearson's value of 171.674. This emphasizes the importance of financial reliability in fostering a content workplace. Finally, the results indicate that the trade union's effectiveness in handling grievances is vital for employee satisfaction, supported by a Pearson's value of 174.939.

Together, these findings illustrate that the various roles played by trade unions significantly impact the overall satisfaction and well-being of employees.

Based on the Chi-square analysis, the null hypothesis (H₀) is rejected, affirming that there is a significant relationship between the statistical level and the role played by trade unions in enhancing employee satisfaction within KSRTC. The data strongly emphasize the importance of trade union activities in various dimensions of workers' welfare and overall job satisfaction. As such, the role of trade unions is not merely supportive but essential in promoting a more satisfied and engaged workforce, which ultimately benefits the organization as a whole.

CONCLUSION

The study on the role of trade unions in enhancing employee satisfaction at the KSRTC Sulthan Bathery Depot underscores their critical importance in advocating for workers' rights and improving overall workplace conditions. The findings indicate a generally positive perception of trade unions among employees, highlighting their contributions to wage negotiations, grievance handling, and the promotion of better working conditions. However, the presence of skepticism among some workers points to the need for ongoing improvements in union practices and communication strategies.

To enhance the efficacy of trade unions and further boost employee satisfaction, several recommendations can be implemented. First, trade unions should actively engage in educational initiatives that inform workers about their rights, benefits, and the importance of union membership. This can empower employees to voice their concerns and participate more actively in union activities. Second, establishing stronger communication channels between union representatives and management can facilitate quicker resolutions to conflicts and grievances. Joint committees can be formed to foster collaboration and transparency in decision-making processes. Finally, unions must prioritize the welfare of all employee categories, particularly casual and contract workers, to ensure equitable treatment and support. By advocating for comprehensive policies that address the needs of all

workers, trade unions can enhance job security and satisfaction across the board. In conclusion, while trade unions play a pivotal role in improving employee satisfaction at KSRTC, continued efforts to evolve and adapt to the workforce's changing needs are essential for fostering a more engaged and satisfied employee base.

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