

Trade Union Participation in Organized Leather Industry in Kolkata, India: A Demographic Discourse

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Abstract

The paper attempts to evaluate the significance of different factors determining the trade union participation in organized leather industry in Kolkata. The research has been conducted based on three sample leather units engaged in three different commercial functions and these units have been selected based on types of commercial activities practiced by these units like tanning , fabricating and both , so that the research can be conducted with maximum precision and a more or less representative outcome can be visible .The research intends to cause significant impact not only in the furtherance of academic research , but also to facilitate the government to introspect about the application of different labour regulations in the industries like leather , where basic human rights are neglected in spite of presence of laws of the land. The research concludes that certain demographic and working condition related factors are significantly determining the current rate of trade union participation and others are not. The research has been conducted on limited number of workers from the three sample units with specific number of workers employed at the time of the study. It further attempts to analyse the trend of trade union participation based on research hypothesis framed according to objectives. However, the research accepts its own limitations and encourages further studies based on the observation made through this paper.

Keywords: Significant factors, trade union participation, three sample units, limitations

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1. Introduction

The Indian leather story tells a tale of a \$6 billion, employing about 2.5 million people crafting shoes, saddles and bags for the world and hoping to triple its exports by 2020, if the current growth rate of 10% continues (Annual Report of ILPA, 2011). The sector can also accommodate about 6 million workforce directly or indirectly in near future (Working Report, Ministry of labour and employment, Government of India, 2010). Helping the success story are the low costs, widely available raw material and world class quality that make India one of the world's fastest growing leather hubs. With about 10 percent of the world's raw material, India's leather exports make up around two percent of world trade and rose by 12 percent during 2008-2011 to about \$2 billion (Export Import Roadmap, Ministry of Trade and Commerce, Government of India, 2011). The leather and leather products industry is one of India's oldest manufacturing industries that catered to the international market right from the middle of the nineteenth century, the demand for its products being both domestic as well as international right from the beginning. About 46 per cent of the production in the sector is exported and it ranks eighth in the list of India's top export earning industries and contributes roughly Rs. 10,000 crores per annum, i.e., about 4 per cent to export earnings. The sector accounts for 2.5 per cent of the global leather-related trade of Rs. 387,200 crores (Export Import Roadmap, Ministry of Trade and Commerce, Government of India, 2011). Therefore, the dynamics of the industry has been shaped to a large extent by export orientation from colonial times. The sector is dominated by small-scale firms although there also exists a significant number of medium and large sized firms in all segments of the industry. The industry is concentrated in several leather clusters in four or five distinct locations in the country, with each cluster containing a wide variety of enterprise forms and organizational structures. To be more specific, the major production centers of leather and leather products are located at Chennai, Ambur, Ranipet, Vaniyambadi, Trichy, Dindigul in Tamil Nadu, Kolkata in West Bengal, Kanpur and Agra in U.P., Calendar in Punjab, Delhi, Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh, Bangalore in Karnataka and Mumbai in Maharashtra. Tamil Nadu is the biggest leather exporter (40%) of the country and its share in India's output on leather products is 70% (Annual Report of ILPA, 2011).

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Labour scenario of Indian leather industry:

The Indian leather industry is highly labour intensive and is concentrated mostly in the small and cottage industry sectors. While leather shoes and uppers are concentrated in large scale units, the sandals and chappals are produced in the household and cottage sector. The typical industry workforce is socially structured through caste and community. A large number of people engaged in the industry (entrepreneurs as well as workers) are even today from traditional leatherworking castes (belonging to the lower castes in the caste hierarchy) and the Muslim community. Due to the age of the industry and its links with the social structure, the organizational structure that has emerged is a very complex one that contains within it elements of continuity with traditional structures as well as those that represent a break with them. The processes in the footwear making include last making, pattern cutting, clicking, sewing assembling and finishing. Child labour is rampant in the industry, especially in home-based small scale units and there is no gender selectivity in child labor. Adults earn wages that are only marginally higher than what the children earn. Irrespective of the experience, skill and family size and requirements, the wage payment system remains insensitive and relatively inelastic. While market forces predominantly govern all other aspects of the industry, the labour is drawn exclusively from the most downtrodden section in most of the leather clusters across India.

Labour scenario in Kolkata leather industry:

West Bengal's leather industry employs over 200,000 people (Department of labour, Government of West Bengal, 2010). As far as working conditions of West Bengal leather industries are concerned, working conditions in the tanneries and the leather manufacturing units are generally appalling except very few units like Bata, Khadims, etc. and there is scant regard for workers' safety or health. However, with the shifting of large number of leather industry organizations to newly built Calcutta Leather Complex (CLC) near Bantala, which is spread over across 1100 acres of land with all modern infrastructure and technical amenities, about 50000 directly employed workers and about

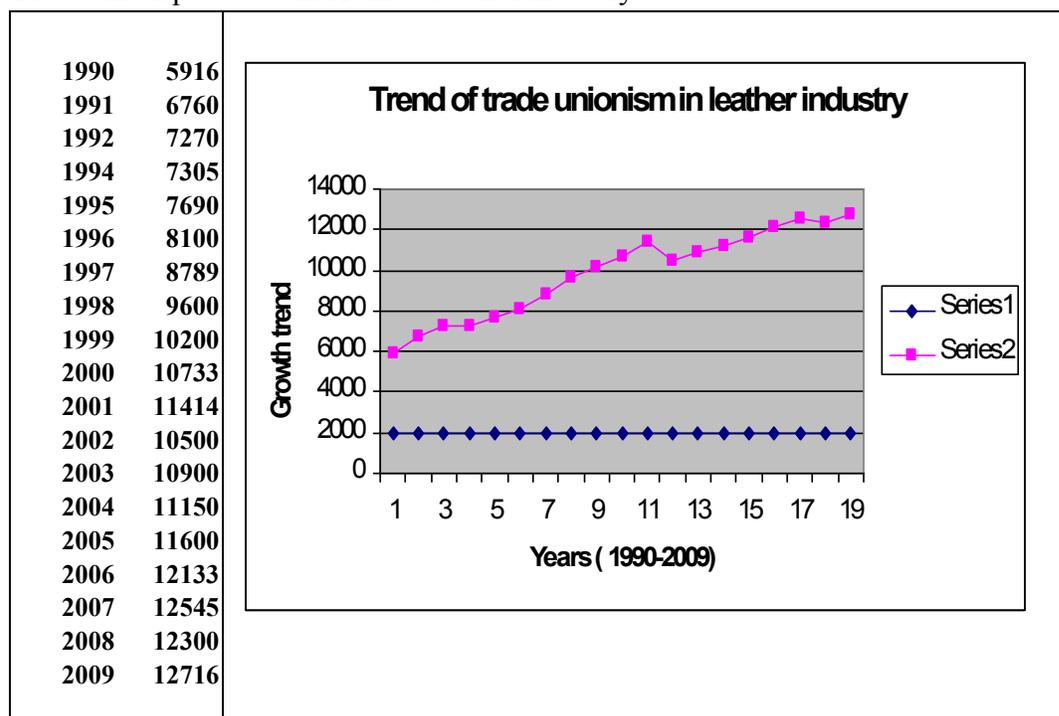
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150000 indirectly dependent work-force are enjoying better working conditions than their counterparts working in traditional concentrations (Kashyap 1997). Though, the traditional leather units of Kolkata are dominated by low caste and Muslim migrant workers from neighbouring states of Bihar, Jharkhand and Eastern Uttar Pradesh, yet the entry of people from different backgrounds are growingly visible in the sector (Kashyap 1997). Moreover about 70% of the workers engaged in the industry are traditionally employed as casual workers. Most of them join the industry as the workers with very low or no skill and they acquire required skills simply by observation at the initial stages. Very often these low skilled new entrants to the sector acquire skill under the guidance of their relatives or somebody from their place of origin, also employed as worker in a leather unit in Kolkata. They are the people, who actually bring these very cheap workers from their villages to enable them to learn the required skills at the place of their employment. Initially, these newly inducted workers are either paid very minimum or no wage and are only provided with the opportunity to learn new skills for the industry and then these people are either given jobs at the same place or they themselves search employment in other units. However, the labour market is flexible and intensively competitive and mostly paid on the piece rate basis. Abundant supply of labour together with the absence of unit level strong labour unions has pushed down the wages to the reservation level. The legal provision of minimum wages is not followed in most cases and the workers are also not in the position of demanding higher wage rates as the supply of labour is in abundance. According to the recent government order, the minimum wage rate for unskilled /low skilled workers in tanneries and leather manufacturing units in KMDA area should be Rs. 162.33, Rs. 178.46 for semi-skilled workers and for the highly skilled workers it should be Rs. 196.31 (Department of labour, Government of West Bengal, 2011) . However, in reality very few units comprising of tanneries, fabricators and manufacturers comply with these minimum wage rates. It has also been observed that in most of the manufacturing units, specially the leather footwear and accessories manufacturing units, the work is based on almost putting out system and during peak season the workers work for 16 to 18 hours per day and during slack season the daily working hour comes down to 6 to seven hours per day only causing loss of employment to many low skilled or unskilled workers, those

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that have been inducted to the workforce during peak hours (Roy, 2009). However, the limited number of workers working under the regular pay-roll remain with their jobs. In tanneries and fabricating units the machine operators and high skilled workers are offered regular employment and in leather product manufacturing units the high skilled workers, specially the solemen and uppermen are kept as fixed workers. Though the practice of child labour and the women workers are rampant in many small home based leather product manufacturing units, still it has been growingly restricted in organized units due to self regulation by the units themselves under the surveillance of respective industry bodies like Indian Leather Products Association etc.

Trade union practices in Kolkata leather industry:



Source: Office of the Labour Commissioner, Government of West Bengal, 2010

Though Kolkata has the bad name at the national level for militant trade unionism over the years, still many sectors including the leather sector tell a relatively different story. Kolkata leather industry is an employment generating

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sector in all senses and the available research findings show that the industry is creating employment for all types of workers starting from illiterate to semi-literate to technically qualified leather technologists and apparel designers. However, the industry practices a very complex equation in terms of employment practices and presence of trade union as well as their effectiveness across the industry. The large number of illiterate and semi-literate workers are the migrants from neighbouring states and working at very low wages with minimum job security with a specific unit, whereas the highly skilled workers with relatively permanent employment status are the part of small segments of workforce with trade union affiliations. The highly skilled leather professionals like the technologists and designers have their own issue of union affiliations at their professional levels, example, India Leather Technologists Association. Therefore, three different trends of trade union involvement are clearly visible in Kolkata leather industry. In low to moderate technology leather units, especially in the tanneries, the unskilled or low skilled irregular workers join the trade unions with the main objective of ensuring the job with the same unit even in case of seasonal employment along with the reasons like ensuring higher wages, whereas the semi-skilled or skilled workers with relatively permanent employment status tend to join trade unions with the objective of enjoying collective power to safeguard themselves against any unfair decision by the employers. The highly skilled professionals, mostly independent professionals employed through retainership basis have their own unions on the issues of professional advancement, remuneration, service contracts, etc. However, the rate of trade unionisation across the industry in Kolkata does not show any specific trend as different types of people employed in the sector have different penetration rates and different units also show the different levels of unionisation. It has also been observed that most of the units with unionized workers do not have unit level unions and rather have industry level unions with different penetration rates across industries. These industry or craft unions are politically affiliated and have different levels of influence on the respective union members at the local levels.

Workforce of Kolkata leather industry are affiliated to three different unions which are completely based on their professional status. For example, most of the medium scale leather units have the presence of Calcutta tannery workers

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union (affiliated to INTTUC), Calcutta Leather Tannery Workers Union (AICCTU) and Bengal Leather Workers Union (affiliated to CITU) . Whereas in relatively larger units like Asian Leather Limited , Bata India Limited, etc. with relatively larger workforce, the existence of organization specific trade unions has been traditionally witnessed . For example, in Bata factory at Batanagar near Kolkata , eight unions affiliated to different political parties exist over the last 40 years and the Bata Mazdoor Union (affiliated to INTUC) and Progressive Workers Union (affiliated to CITU) demand majority union status with larger workforce support during this period. Bata has the highest trade union penetration rate as more than 90% of its current workforce of about 6000 people are members of any of the unions . However, from the overall industry perspective, the trade unionisation rate is not only relatively less (merely 6-6.5%) , but also the union membership is unevenly distributed across units.

Trade union status of three sample units:

The trade union status of the three sample leather units show some typical trends. These trends can be identified as follows:

- i) All the units have the existence of one union only, which is very much unit specific and are widely different in different units.
- ii) All the existing trade unions at these units are affiliated to politically affiliated central trade unions at the industry level.
- iii) The trade unions formed in these sample units are relatively new and still striving for greater strength and expansion under political patronage.
- iv) These trade unions have attracted low to moderate number of members across the workforce at the respective units. The unions at the respective unit levels are trying hard to expand their membership over the years.
- v) These unions have achieved limited success at different scales at these units like successful wage negotiation in Asian Leather Limited (2008), priority to existing casual workers in case of future employment at Kim Lung Tannery (2006), etc. This agreement came into existence by an industry level collective agreement in

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between AITTUC affiliated Calcutta Leather Workers' Union and Chinese Tannery Owners' Association in the year 2008 benefiting about 10000 casual workers employed in Kolkata tanneries.

- vi) Calcutta leather industry employers have mostly practiced negotiations on collective basis with the industry level unions and not at the unit levels with the practices at Bata.

2. Research objectives

The observation on the trade union participation in leather industry in India is significantly absent in the research domain. The industry is however a rare blend of diverse types of workers. Their diversity is based on different types of employment engagement, age and gender profiles and the different units of employment. Their tendency to trade union participation is surely varied in nature and therefore, the scope of research to evaluate the impact of different factors on trade union participation remains very significant.

Following are the different research objectives of the research efforts appended in the paper:

- i) To evaluate the impact of demographic factors like gender, educational level, age on the trend of trade union participation in sample leather industry in Kolkata, India.
- ii) To evaluate the significance of working conditions like nature of job, place of work (types of units), etc. as the factors influencing the trade union participation rate of the employees.

3. Research hypothesis

Based on the research objectives, the following hypothesis have been framed:

- H1: Gender is a significant factor for joining trade union
- H2: Nature of job is a significant factor for joining trade union
- H3: Type of unit is a significant factor for joining trade union
- H4: Industry experience is a significant factor for joining trade union
- H5: Working with the current unit is a significant factor for joining trade union
- H6: Educational level is a significant factor for joining trade union
- H7: Age is a significant factor for joining trade union

4. Review of literature

The wide variety of literatures both of academic and non-academic nature are available on the different aspects of the topic discussed in the paper. However, only few major literatures have been covered here to provide a comprehensive idea about the research trends on the different dimensions of current research.

The review of literature has been classified into two major areas:

- Theoretical literatures on trade unionism in India
- Empirical literatures on trade unionism in India

5. Theoretical literatures

Trade Unions have become an integral and powerful factor in the contemporary production and distribution system. Modern industrialization has paved the way for trade unions. They are now exercising a strong influence on the methods of production of goods and services, their distribution, the allocation of economic resources, the volume of employment and unemployment, the character of rights and privileges, policies of governments, the attitude and status of legal masses of population, and the very nature of economic and social organisations. However, under such conditions, their role has evoked deep and wide controversies. *Mathur and Mathur (1962)* , *Reveri (1972)* , *Soman (1957)*, *Karnik (1960)* , *Kennedy (1955)* , *Sharma (1963)* , *Fonseca (1964)* , *Ghosh (1960)* and *Malhotra (1963)* have provided a lot of information both theoretical and empirical on trade union movement in India . *Mathur and Mathur* , *Karnik* , *Ghosh* have traced the history of trade union movement in India. The studies of *Kennedy (1955)* , *Vaid (1962)*, *Dufty (1964)* , *Fonseca (1964)* , *Sharma (1963)* , *Johri (1967)*, *Soman (1957)* , *Nigam (1984)*, *Agarwal (1984)* and *Bhangoo (1987)* have raised the issues such as process of unionism, its role in economic development, role of the legislation and government in promoting unionism, new problems and challenges of trade unions and other related issues of trade unionism in India. The major limitations of these studies are their excessive dependence on secondary data without using behavioral data. The studies on unionism at the area, industry and enterprise level are very few in India.

6. Empirical literatures on trade unionism

Pandey and Vikram (1969) have done the causal analysis on level of workers' participation in trade unions in industries. They have identified attributes such as lack of enlightened leadership, illiteracy among workers, managements' hostility, low interest of the etc. The studies of *Dayal and Sharma (1970)*, *Sinha and Paul (1963)*, *Ganguli (1954)*, *Sayles and Strauss (1953)*, *Monga and Mogga (1981)* and *Mukherjee (1985)* have investigated the variables, attitude toward unions' functions and other perceptions regarding unions, These studies have mainly investigated the relationship between trade union participation and different variables like age, length of service, rural or urban background and educational level.

There have been very limited numbers of research reports on the commercial aspects of leather business in Kolkata, but no research observations have been identified on the trade unionism in the same industry. Therefore, the scope of research on the factoral influences on the trade union participation in Kolkata leather industry can be identified. Therefore, the present paper can be considered as one of the significant contributions in the direction of research on workers participation in trade unionism in leather industry in Kolkata.

7. Limitations of the study

The study has the limitations as all the data have been collected through single source self reported measures. Therefore, common method variance may be a major problem. Responses of individual survey items may not be truly independent as there has been a chance influence of group membership. From this perspective, it can be said that more research is needed to examine the generalization of this study.

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Hypothesis No.	Statement of Hypothesis	Significant/ not significant	Conclusion
H1	Gender is a significant factor for joining trade union	Significant	Hypothesis accepted
H2	Nature of job is a significant factor for joining trade union	Significant	Hypothesis accepted
H3	Type of unit is a significant factor for joining trade union	Not Significant	Hypothesis rejected
H4	Industry experience is a significant factor for joining trade union	Not Significant	Hypothesis rejected
H5	Working with the current unit is a significant factor for joining trade union	Significant	Hypothesis accepted
H6	Educational level is a significant factor for joining trade union	Not Significant	Hypothesis rejected
H7	Age is a significant factor for joining trade union	Significant	Hypothesis accepted

8. Research methodology

On the basis of the three criteria, five units have been initially shortlisted. However, out of these five units, three sample leather units have been surveyed. The leather units of Kolkata have a large number of workers. However, only the units with more than 100 workers have plant level unions. The units have been selected on the basis of the past records of industrial disputes and relatively larger number of unionized workers. These units have been surveyed after permission has been granted by the competent authority.

The three criteria for short listing these five units and the subsequent surveying of the three units were as follows :

- i) The units should employ at least 150 workers at the time of survey
- ii) At least 10% of the workforce are members of some of the unions

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- iii) The units should have been occupationally engaged in different activities.

After selecting the sample units, stratified random sampling technique has been adopted to determine the number of respondents from each surveyed units. As the units employing both regular and casual workers and both these categories of workers have affiliations with trade unions, the random stratified sampling technique has been used. Based on the number of workers employed at the time of initiation of survey, a total number of 193 workers have been surveyed through close ended structured questionnaires. The total number of workers employed in these units at the time of survey have been little more than 400, which shows that in total about 47% of the workers have been surveyed, However, after rejecting about 40 response sheets due to their incompleteness, etc., a total number of 153 responses have been recorded for further analysis. This shows the effective rate of 38% response patterns recorded for the purpose of the study. Maximum care has been taken in determining sample size as it is considered that minimum 30% sample is valid in any research observation. The basis of random stratified sampling is the different types of workers based on their employment engagement pattern.

The survey is based on the close ended questionnaire, which highlights the following criteria for joining or non-joining of trade unions by the surveyed workers at their respective units:

The details of the surveyed sample can be presented through the following sample frame.

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Table 1: Details of sample respondents

Variables	Sub-variables	Frequency	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Gender	Male	148	96.7	96.7
	Female	5	3.3	100
	Total	153	100	100
Nature of job				
	Regular	26	17.0	17.0
	Casual	127	83.0	100
	Total	153	100	100
Type of unit employed				
	Tannery (Kim lung tannery)	64	41.8	41.8
	Fabricator (Asian leather Limited)	60	39.2	81.0
	Tannery cum fabricator (Abid Hussain and Brothers)	29	19.0	100
	Total	153	100	100
Origin				
	Migrant	80	52.3	52.3
	Local	73	47.7	100
	Total	153	100	100
Duration of service at current workplace				
	Less than two years	63	41.2	41.2
	More than 2 years	90	58.8	100
	Total	153	100	100
Duration of service within the same industry but outside current unit				
	Less than 2 years	45	29.4	29.4
	More than 2 years	108	70.6	100
	Total	153	100	100
Educational level				
	School drop-out	140	91.5	91.5
	Matric and above	13	8.5	100
	Total	153	100	100
Age				
	Below 20	28	18.3	18.3
	21-30	121	79.1	97.4
	Above 30	4	2.6	100
	Total	153	100	100
Member of any unionyes/no.....				
	Yes	32	20.9	20.9
	No	121	79.1	100

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	Total	153	100	100
If yes , why.....				
	Job security	16	50	50
	Peer pressure	16	50	100
	Total	32	100	100
If no, why.....				
	Union exists , but ineffective	37	30.57	30.57
	Management does not consider union joining favorably	84	69.42	100
	Total	121	100	100

However, for the convenience of research, the attempt has been made to restrict the research validity of some of the factors only according to the research hypothesis framed.

Unit-wise distribution of variables of trade union participation:

The above details can be further segregated in the following manner:

Table 2: Details of sample distribution

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Kim Lung Tannery</i>		<i>Asian Leather Limited</i>		<i>Abid Hussain and Brothers</i>	
	<i>Male: 64</i>	<i>Famale: 0</i>	<i>Male : 56</i>	<i>Female : 4</i>	<i>Male : 28</i>	<i>Female : 1</i>
Nature of Job	Regular : 10	Irregular : 54	Regular : 10	Irregular : 50	Regular : 06	Irregular : 23
Origin	Migrant : 35	Local : 29	Migrant: 40	Local: 20	Migrant : 5	Local: 24
Duration of job at current workplace	Less than 2 years : 30	More than 2 years:34	Less than 2 years :30	More than 2 years:26	Less than 2 years :3	More than 2 years:26

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Duration of service within the same industry outside the current unit	Less than 2 years: 19	More than 2 years:45	Less than 2 years:20	More than 2 years:40	Less than 2 years:6	More than 2 years: 23			
	School drop out : 59	Matric & above:5	School dropout :52	Matric & above:8	School dropout :29	Matric & above: 0			
Age group	*10	**53	***1	*16	**42	***2	*2	**26	***1

Below 20, **21-30, *above 31*

From the above table (Table :2), it has been observed that about 43% of the male workers from the sample units are associated with Kim Lung Tannery, about 38% are from Asian Leather Limited and about 19% are from Abid Hussain and Brothers. Whereas there has been no female workers in Kim Lung Tannery and 80% of the female workers included in the survey are from Asian Leather limited, From an exploratory research, it has been observed that all the female workers are not engaged in manufacturing of the leather products and only engaged in packaging and tagging activities at their respective work units. It has also been observed that the majority of the workers are basically migrants from neighbouring states and the highest percentage of such migrant workers are employed in Asian Leather Limited. Here more than 66% of the migrant workers surveyed are employed. The predominant trend of employing irregular workers is visible through the sample distribution (as shown in Table 2). Across all the sample units, the average rate of irregular workforce surveyed proportionate to their actual strength in the total workforce in those units have been about 84% in Kim Lung Tannery and Asian Leather Limited and about 80% in Abid Hussain and Brothers. The study also reveals that majority of the workers in these three units fall under the age group of 21-30 years. Largest per cent of people under this age group surveyed among these three sample units are found to be employed in Abid Hussain and Brothers ,

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i.e., about 90% .All the surveyed workers in the Abid Hussain and Brothers are school drop outs .However, the workers with very low education level, i.e., school drop-outs are employed in majority across the industry and the sample distribution clearly reveals the trend. Experience wise the trend is distinctively different in between company or unit wise experience and industry wise experience. It has been observed that though workers with both < 2 years experience and > 2 years experience at the current place of work are more or less same at least in Kim Lung Tannery and Asian Leather Limited, yet at the industry level experience outside the current place of work, workers with more than 2 years of experience are majority in numbers. This shows the trend that most of the surveyed workers are employed in the industry for more than 2 years, though at their current place of work it has been distributed more or less equally into two groups, i.e. more than and less than 2 years of experience. Education level wise, the visible trend shows that most of the workers across three different units are school drop outs, i.e., about 92% in Kim Lung Tannery, about 87% in Asian Leather Limited and 100% in Abid Hussain and Brothers, etc. Age wise distribution shows that majority of the workers come under the group of 21-30 years across three units. As these findings are observed on the basis of samples drawn through simple random sampling, they can be considered as the reflection of the overall scenario in the respective leather units.

9. Analysis and observations

Here the target variable is member of a union and using SPSS version, 17 members of the union are taken as 1 and non members as 0. A positive coefficient implies that increase in that variable value will increase the probability of being part of a union, while decrease in that variable value will reduce the probability of being part of a union. The logistics regression technique has been used to assess the nature of coefficient between different variables. The following table shows the impact of different variables on the possibility of trade union participation and their level of significance.

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Variables	B	Exp(B) (Odds Ratio)	p Value	Significance
Nature of the job	1.88	6.53	0.021	Significant
Type of the unit employed	-5.11	0.01	<0.001	Significant
Migrant from other states	0.36	1.43	0.629	Not Significant
Working in the industry for	-0.05	0.95	0.968	Not Significant
Working with the current unit	-3.73	0.02	0.003	Significant
Educational level	1.82	6.17	0.227	Not Significant
Age	2.44	11.43	0.001	Significant

From the above calculation, it can be easily observed that coefficient of nature of job is positive. Nature of Job is variable which has value 1 for regular and 2 for casual. This clearly implies that a casual worker has a greater chance of becoming a union member as compared to a regular worker. The research findings of the analysis reflect the normal trend of trade union participation as it can be presumed that the casuals seem to be more insecure about their job than the regulars. On the issue of impact of duration of service on the trade union participation, the coefficient of Working with the current unit has been found to be negative. It has also been observed that working with the current unit is a variable, where 1 is <2 years and 2 is >2 years. This implies that a worker working for <2 years has a greater probability to join the union as compared to the worker working for >2 years. It has also been observed that the coefficient of Type of the unit employed is negative. Here values are 1: Tannery, 2: Fabricators and 3: Tanner cum Fabricators. The analysis shows that the tannery workers have greater chance of being members of union as compared to other industries. Similarly, coefficient of age is positive. Here values are 1 = "Below 20", 2 = "21-30", 3 = "Above 30". This implies workers of middle age group have a greater chance of becoming members as compared to lower age group. Therefore, all the above variables have been observed as significant determinants in forecasting trade union participation in surveyed leather units in Kolkata. Remaining variables are found to be insignificant factors in determining trade union participation in the organized leather industry in Kolkata.

10. Conclusion

Though, the number of union members covered in the research process are limited in numbers and non-members are much higher, yet as a very initial research on the trade union participation or avoidance tendency in a largely labour intensive industry like leather industry has some significance. The research has already accepted that the trade unionization at the Kolkata Leather Industry is at the very nascent stage with exception to Bata , and there attempts to analyse the trend of unionisation based on certain common factors as identified by selected factors determining trade union participation. The research based on limited sample size has already identified some of factors as significant and some others insignificant for determining the trade union participation in sample organized leather units of Kolkata.

Factors like nature of job (regular or irregular), types of unit employed (tannery, fabricator and manufacturer) , duration of working with the current unit and age have been identified as significant factors among all the factors determining the level of union participation . The analysis reveals that tannery workers have higher tendency of joining trade unions, regular workers are more prone to join trade unions, new people in the company prefer to join trade unions more and the middle age group are the more prone to join trade unions . The policy implications suggest that the government should regulate the environment of leather business in such a manner that facilitates healthy and productive participation of different segments of workers from the industry.

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