



## Awareness of Labour Welfare Legislations and Union Participation

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**ABSTRACT**

Several labour welfare legislations are in existence to protect the workers from exploitations. Reasonable knowledge on these laws will help the workers to safeguard them and increase their bargaining power. The awareness of the provisions of the labour legislations will enable the workers to claim their rights. Awareness on labour laws would enhance the participation in trade unions. In this background, an attempt has been made to study the level of awareness of the Acts, their provisions and the association of legal awareness with trade union participation. The present study is conducted in the Coimbatore district among the workers of transport sector through a structured questionnaire by convenience sampling method. The Statistical tools applied for the study is percentage, ANOVA and Chi Square Analysis. The outcome of the study has implications to the workers, union leaders and employers in increasing the awareness pertaining to labour welfare legislations.

**KEYWORDS**

Awareness, Labour Welfare, Labour legislations, Union Participation

**INTRODUCTION**

Industrial progress depends on satisfied labour force and in this connection the importance of labour welfare measures was accepted long back. (MinakshiGarg, Pardeep Jain, 2013). The conflicts between employers and employees are inherent in any economic activity. Conflict is permissible, if it aims at minimum interruption in economy. In India it has much significance and the equitable settlement is its ultimate objective (G. Ravi Selvam, 2003). Several legislations, such as Factories Act, 1948, Employees State Insurance Act, 1948, Minimum Wages Act, 1948, The payment of Bonus Act 1965 were passed to protect the workers. Kumar P. Ashok (2012) in his study on Labour welfare measures concluded that labour welfare measures helps to promote industrial relations and to reduce the level of absenteeism. But in actual practice, are the workers aware of these labour welfare legislations? What is the extent of their awareness pertaining to labour welfare legislations? What are the ways by which they claim their welfare measures? Do the workers approach unions for claiming labour welfare measures? Does the worker's legal awareness lead to union participation? To seek solutions to the issues raised, the following objectives were framed.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To examine the extent of awareness of Labour legislations and level of union participation of the workers.
- To suggest ways to sustain or increase the level of awareness on labour welfare legislations.

**LEGAL AWARENESS OF WORKERS**

**Table No. 2**

Legislations	Extent of Awareness				
	TUA	NA	NANUA	A	HA
<b>The Factories Act 1948</b>	42(4.3%)	94 (9.7%)	132 (13.6%)	375 (38.7%)	326(33.6%)
<b>The Minimum Wages Act 1948</b>	92(9.5%)	122(12.6%)	170 (17.5%)	396 (40.9%)	189(19.5%)
<b>The Payment Of Bonus Act 1966</b>	95(9.8%)	131(13.5%)	143 (14.8%)	369 (38.1%)	231 (23.8%)
<b>The Workmen Compensation Act 1923</b>	123 (12.7%)	155 (16%)	181 (18.7%)	346 (35.7%)	164 (16.9%)
<b>The Payment Of Wages Act 1936</b>	56 (5.8%)	94 (9.7%)	129 (13.3%)	398 (41.1%)	292 (30.1%)
<b>The ESI Act 1936</b>	111 (11.5%)	175 (18.1%)	175 (18.1%)	300 (31%)	208 (21.5%)
<b>The Industrial Disputes Act 1947</b>	108 (11.1%)	153 (15.8%)	170 (17.5%)	382 (39.4%)	156 (16.1%)
<b>The Trade Union Act 1926</b>	80 (8.3%)	107 (11%)	146 (15.1%)	440 (45.4%)	196 (20.2%)

TUA- Totally Unaware      NA - Not Aware      NANUA - Neither Aware nor Unaware  
 A – Aware                      HA - Highly Aware

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The present study is conducted in the Coimbatore district among the workers of transport sector through a structured questionnaire by convenience sampling method. A total of 1,000 questionnaires was distributed, 31 questionnaires were not returned, 969 workers responded with all the data required for the study. The Statistical tools applied for the study is percentage, ANOVA and Chi Square Analysis. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) has been used to find out whether the Mean Participation Index of workers differed significantly. An index called "Participation Index" was calculated. The participation index thus calculated ranges from 22.86 to 100.00 and the overall mean Member Participation Index amounts to 72.46. The calculated F value has been tested for its significance and the levels of confidence chosen are five and one per cent. Chi-Square test is employed to ascertain the association between legal awareness and workers participation and the level of confidence chosen are five and one per cent.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

**LEGAL AWARENESS AND MEMBER PARTICIPATION**

Employees are governed by several Acts, In order to examine the level of legal awareness of the union members, details regarding the awareness of members with respect to labour legislations are collected and presented in the Table No. 2

From the Table No.2 it could be inferred that, majority of workers are aware about the Health, Safety and Welfare measures of the Factories Act 1948. Of the total 969 workers, 40.9% of the workers are aware of the Minimum Wages Act 1948. 38.1% workers are aware about the bonus fixation, maximum and minimum amount of bonus payable to employees as per the Payment of Bonus Act 1966. Under the Workmen Compensation Act 1923, compensation is given for disablement and occupation diseases. It is not known to 278 workers. Out of 969 workers more than 60% per cent of the workers possess knowledge about the provisions of the Payment of Wages Act 1936. More than 50% of workers are aware about the sickness benefit, disablement benefits, dependents benefits and medical benefits of the ESI Act 1936. The Industrial Disputes Act 1947 provides procedure for settlement of industrial disputes and settlement machinery. 538(55.5%) workers are aware of the procedure for settlement of industrial disputes and about the availability of settlement machinery respectively. Majority of workers (more than 60%) are aware about the Trade Union Act 1926.

**LEGAL AWARENESS AND UNION PARTICIPATION**

Based on the extent of awareness possessed, the workers are divided into three groups. The workers with high level of awareness on labour legislations are brought under the first group. The second group consists of workers with moderate level of awareness. Workers with low awareness form the third group.

**LEGAL AWARENESS AND UNION PARTICIPATION INDEX**

**Table No. 3**

Legal Awareness	Numbers	Participation Index	Range	F Value
High	113(11.70%)	94.61	89.29-100.00	1279.506**
Moderate	691(71.30%)	75.52	56.43-88.57	
Low	165(17.00%)	44.48	22.86-55.71	
Total	969	72.46	22.86-100.00	

Table Value: Five per cent level : 3.005 One per cent level : 4.627

In the category of workers with high level of awareness, there are 113 (11.70%) workers. Their participation index is 94.61. It ranges between 89.29 and 100. Out of 113 workers, the level of participation of 50 (44.25%) workers is above average and the remaining 63 (55.75%) is below average. In the category of workers who are with moderate level of awareness, there are 691 (71.30%) workers and their participation index is 75.52. It ranges between 56.43 and 88.57. Out of 691 workers, the participation index of 398 (57.60%) workers is above average and 293 (42.40%) is below average. In the third group of workers who possess low level of awareness on labour laws, there are 165 (17.00%) workers. Their participation index is 44.48. It ranges between 22.86 and 57.71. Out of 165 workers, the participation index of 91 workers (55.15%) is above average and the remaining 74 (44.85%) is below average.

As the calculated F value (1279.506) is greater than the table value (4.627) at one per cent level of significance. It is inferred that, there exists significant difference in the mean participation index of workers who are classified on the basis of legal awareness on labour laws.

From the Table No. 3, it is clear that, the average level of participation in trade union is high in the category of workers who possess high awareness on the labour laws. The participation is less in the category of workers who are with low awareness on labour laws. In order to find whether the legal

awareness is associated with the level of participation in trade unions the following null (Ho) hypothesis is framed and tested.

H<sub>0</sub>: Legal Awareness is not associated with level of participation in trade union.

**LEGAL AWARENESS AND LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION**

**Table No. 4**

Legal Awareness	Level of Participation			Total	χ <sup>2</sup> Value
	Low	Moderate	High		
High	4 (3.50%)	63 (55.80%)	46 (40.70%)	113 (100.00%)	181.428**
Moderate	55 (8.00%)	544 (78.70%)	92 (13.30%)	691 (100.00%)	
Low	65 (39.40%)	85 (51.50%)	15 (9.10%)	165 (100.00%)	
Total	124	692	153	969	

Table Value: Five per cent level: 9.488 One per cent level: 13.277

From the Table No.4, it is clear that, Out of 113 workers who are with high level of legal awareness. The level of participation of four (3.50%) member is low, 63 (55.80%) is moderate and 46 (40.70%) is high. Out of 691 workers who are with moderate awareness the level of participation of 55 (8.00%) workers is low, 544 (78.70%) is moderate and 92 (13.30%) is high. Out of 165 workers with low level of legal awareness, the level of participation of 65 (39.40%) member is low, the participation of 85 (51.50%) workers is moderate and 15 (9.10%) is high.

The percentage of workers with high level of participation in trade union is high in the category of workers who have high level on legal awareness. As the calculated Chi- square value (181.428) is greater than the table value (13.277) at one per cent level, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence it could be inferred that there exists significant association between the level on legal awareness and level of participation of workers in trade unions.

**FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS**

The results of ANOVA test shows that there exists significant difference in the mean participation index of workers who are classified on the basis of legal awareness on labour laws. From the Chi Square analysis it is inferred that there exists significant association between the level on legal awareness and level of participation of workers in trade unions.

The labour laws aim at providing protection to the workers. The workers with low awareness should make an attempt to increase their knowledge pertaining to these laws. This can be done through conducting Training Programmes, Seminars and Workshops on Labour Welfare Legislations.

**CONCLUSION**

The outcome of the study will help the workers, union leaders and employersto increase the awareness pertaining to labour welfare legislation. Awareness of labour welfare legislations and union participation is an interesting field of research. The research on awareness of labour welfare legislations can be expanded to various dimensions. Studies can be conducted sector-wise namely manufacturing sector, service sector. Private Sector and Public Sector employees' awareness of labour welfare legislations of different industries may be thought of.

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