

Trade Unions and Labour Welfare Measures – A Study on PSUs in Kerala

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ABSTRACT

Labour welfare was the setting up of minimum desirable standards that enable the worker and his family to lead a good working life, family life and social status. For safeguarding the interest of the labourers trade unions play an integral part, irrespective of whether it was a big organization or small organization or public sector organization or private sector organization. Present study was an attempt to identify the labour welfare measures of the Public Sector Undertakings in Kerala and the role of trade union in labour welfare measures. The study reveals that trade unions activities were limited only to conduct strikes for increasing wages. They were not involving in labour welfare activities for the labourers. The study suggests that the trade unions should also participate in the labour welfare activities of the organization which was the most important factor for gaining the confidence of the workers.

Keywords: migrants' remittances, productive investments, micro activities.

INTRODUCTION:

Men, material and money were regarded as the three important factors of production. Of these, men were regarded as the dynamic factor of production as, without the efficient use of men, organization can never achieve the end result. For this purpose, they must be provided with sufficient labour welfare measures. Report No. II of the ILO, Asian Regional Conference, states labour welfare as "such services, facilities and amenities which may be established outside or in the vicinity of undertakings, to enable the persons employed there in to perform their work in healthy and congenial surroundings and to provide them with amenities conducive to good health and high morale". Labour welfare measures were generally undertaken by three main agencies – the employers, the workers' organization and the state government. Labour welfare work by the workers' organization includes the welfare activities by the trade unions for the benefit of its members, out of their own funds and also organised by these unions. Present study was an attempt to identify the role played by the trade union in the welfare of the labourers of the organization.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Satyanarayana, D. (2015), study aimed to understand the extent of employee welfare measures and its awareness level in APPM, Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh. It was found from the study that the Andhra Pradesh Paper Mill Ltd (APPM), Rajahmundry was a global company which considers the employee welfare as one of the determinants of industrial relations. The study suggested that APPM has been improving civic amenities as the employees' perceptions. The perceptions of worker regarding welfare measures are positively recorded. Rajkuar, B. (2014) attempted to identify the prevailing labour welfare measures and social security in IT industries in Chennai. The study reveals that the welfare facilities help to motivate and retain employees. Most of the welfare facilities helped to motivate the employees which ensures employee satisfaction and resulted in increased productivity.

Shil, P., & Kar, S. (2013) in their article titled “Railway employees perception towards working condition and role performed by trade unions: A study on Badarpur Sub-division of N.F. Railway” attempts to measure the satisfaction of the railway employees about the role performed by the trade unions and the other activities of the trade union related to the upgradation of the railway employees in the Badarpur sub division of N.F Railway. The study revealed that the trade unions were not only playing an active role in improving the quality of work life of employee, but also in maintaining good industrial relations in the organisation. Infact, the welfare of the employees seems to be an inseparable component of the functions of these trade unions.

Donado, A., & Wolde, K. (2012), in their article titled “How trade unions increase welfare” attempts to study the role of trade unions in increasing output and welfare of economy. Historically worker movements have played a crucial role in making workplace safer. Firms traditionally oppose better health standards. According to their interpretation, workplace safety was costly for firms but increases the average health of the workers and thereby the aggregate labour supply. Worker movements and trade unions provide a means to exchange information among workers about health implications of hazardous jobs. By pooling this information and setting labour standard accordingly, trade unions increase output and welfare of an economy.

Sarma, A. M. (2011) identified the primary function of a trade union as to protect the interest of its members by involving in welfare activities like organizing mutual benefit societies, co- operatives, unemployment assistance, libraries, games and cultural programmes. Education of its members in all aspect of their working life , including the improvement of their civic environment will be another function.

White., M. (2005), studied the impact of unions on management, practices adopted to reduce labour costs, need for implementing high performance work systems and employee welfare provisions. The study reveals that, comparing to organisations without trade unions; organisations with trade unions were found to have practices which were consistent with “mutual gains” outcomes.

Gosh, P., Nandan, S., & Gupta, A. (2009) focuses their study on plant level trade unions of PSUs of India, aims to capture the changing roles of trade unions from maintaining good industrial relations to improving the quality of life of workers. The study suggests that if a union is actively involved in labour welfare of the workers, then the workers may be motivated to remain attached to it, rather than joining another union.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To identify the statutory and non- statutory labour welfare measures of the organization
2. To study the role of trade union in labour welfare measures

SCOPE:

The study covers all the labourers (9879 labourers) in the manufacturing sector (35 units) of PSUs in Trivandrum.

METHODOLOGY:

The method used for the study was both analytical and descriptive in nature. Both the primary and the secondary data had been used for the study. Primary data had been collected from 60 labourers of Public Sector Undertakings. By applying stratified random sampling method, 35 units has been classified into 3 strata on the basis of number of labourers working in each PSUs namely small scale (below 100 labourers), medium scale (between 100 and 500 labourers) and large scale (above 500 labourers). From each strata 20 labourers has been selected using convenience sampling method. Secondary data had been collected from various sources such as thesis, journals and reports.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

The labour welfare measures provided to the PSUs in Kerala can be classifies into two – statutory and non statutory labour welfare measures. Statutory welfare measures consist of those which were provided under the different labour legislation. All the employers in India were statutorily required to provide these measures. Non- statutory welfare measures include those which were provided by the employers and workers’ organization apart from the statutorily welfare measures. The attempt to identify the statutory labour welfare measure provided to the labourers of the organization was depicted in the Table No.1 and the non statutory labour welfare measures were depicted in Table No. 2

Table No 1: Statutory labour welfare measures

Statutory Welfare Measures	No. of Respondents			
	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
Uniform washing facility	0	0	60	100
Uniform storing facility	42	70	18	30
Sitting facilities	54	90	6	10
Drinking water facility	60	100	0	0
First aid appliances	45	75	15	25
Shelters, Lunch room and rest room	39	65	21	35
Canteen	36	60	24	40
Crèche	0	0	60	100
Welfare Officers Services	21	35	39	65

Source: Primary Data

The above analysis reveals that majority of the labourers in the PSUs were provided statutory welfare measures such as uniform storing facilities (70%), sitting facilities (90%), drinking water facilities (100%), First aid appliances (75%), Shelters, lunch room and rest room facilities (65%) and Canteen (60%) facility. But majority of the labourers were not provided with welfare officers services (65%). None of the labourers were provided with uniform washing facility and crèche facilities in the organization.

Table No 2: Non statutory labour welfare measures

Statutory Welfare Measures	No. of Respondents			
	Responses (Yes)	Percentage	Responses (No)	Percentage
Educational facilities	48	80	12	20
Medical facilities	42	70	18	30
Transportation facilities	6	10	54	90
Recreation facilities	24	40	36	60
Housing schemes	45	75	15	25
Proper lighting	39	65	21	35
Latrines and urinals	60	100	0	0
Counselling services	21	35	39	65
Washing allowance	39	65	21	35
Uniform allowance	36	60	24	40

Source: Primary Data

It was evident from the above analysis that majority of the labourers were provided with a number of statutory welfare measures such as educational facilities (48%), medical facilities(42%), housing schemes (45%), proper lighting (39%), Latrines and urinals(60%), washing allowances (39%) and uniform allowances(36%). However, transportation (6%), recreational (24%) and counselling services (21%) were not provided to them (majority). Trade unions were the voluntary organization of workers formed mainly to promote, protect and improve through collective action, the social, economic and political interest of its members. Seeking a healthy and safe working environment was also a prominent feature of union activity. Analysis (5-point scale) on the study about the role of trade union in labour welfare measures was shown in the following table.

Table No 3: Role of trade union in the labour welfare measures

Statement	Yes		No	
	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
Helps to secure better wages	45	75	15	25
Participation in labour welfare activities of the organization	6	10	54	90
Support to satisfy the economic needs	12	20	48	80
Run welfare institutions	6	10	54	90
Redress of grievances	48	80	12	20

Statement	Yes		No	
	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
Sincerity in protecting the interest of the workers	24	40	36	60
A support to production programme of the organization	57	95	3	5
Labour strikes represent the needs of the workers	36	60	24	40

Source: Primary data

The above analysis reveals that 75% (majority) of the respondents were of the opinion that trade unions helps to secure better wages for the labourers. However a minor percentage (25%) disagree with the same. 54% (majority) of the respondents opined that trade unions were not participating in the labour welfare activities of the organization. But a minor percentage (10%) shares a different view. That was they opined that trade unions were participating in the welfare activities of the organization. 90% of the respondents opined that trade unions were not running any welfare institutions. However 80% of the respondents were of the opinion that trade unions were helping to redress their grievances. A majority of the respondents (60%) feel that trade unions were not sincere towards the labourers of the organization. 57 respondents (95%) finds that trade unions were supporting the production programmes of the organization. 60% of the respondents feel that the trade unions were conducting the labour strikes for protecting the interest of the labourers.

FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS:

The labourers in the PSUs were provided statutory welfare measures such as uniform storing facilities, sitting facilities, drinking water facilities, first aid appliances, Shelters, lunch room and rest room facilities and Canteen facilities. But majority of the labourers were not provided with welfare officers services. None of the labourers were provided with uniform washing facility and crèche facilities in the organization. In the case of non statutory welfare measures, the labourers were provided with a number of statutory welfare measures such as educational facilities, medical facilities, housing schemes, proper lighting, Latrines and urinals, washing allowances and uniform allowances. But transportation facilities, recreational facilities and counselling services were not provided to them. An analysis on the role of trade union on the labour welfare measures reveals that trade unions neither participating in the labour welfare activities of the organization nor they were running any welfare institutions. However trade unions were helping to redress their grievances. A majority of the respondents feel that trade unions were not sincere towards the labourers of the organization. But trade unions were supporting the production programmes of the organization. Respondents feel that the trade unions were conducting the labour strikes for protecting the interest of the labourers.

PSUs in Kerala failed to provide all the statutory welfare measures as per the Factories Act 1948. Government of Kerala should take initiative to provide uniform washing facility and crèche facility to the labourers of the organization. Trade unions were not participating actively for labour welfare activities of the organization. They were only taking effort to secure better wages to the workers. Trade unions should also participate in the labour welfare activities of the organization and should stand for the labourers for protecting their interest.

CONCLUSION:

Labour welfare measures help the workers and his family to lead a good working life, family life and social status. For safeguarding the interest of the labourers trade unions should play an important role as trade unions were one of the agency who provide labour welfare measures to the workers of the organization. Present study was an attempt to identify the labour welfare measures of the Public Sector Undertakings in Kerala and the role of trade union in labour welfare measures. The study reveals that trade unions activities were limited only to conduct strikes for increasing wages. They were not involving in labour welfare activities for the labourers. The study suggests that the trade unions should also participate in the labour welfare activities of the organization which was the most important factor for gaining the confidence of the workers.

SCOPE FOR FUTURE STUDY:

A comparative study on Trade unions of central and state PSUs would help to identify the areas where the trade unions can extend their activity towards labour welfare measures. In Kerala, it was observed that unions were more involved in politics than on concentrating on the welfare of the workers. The leaders and the office bearers were more focused on fulfilling their personal interests without paying any attention to the hard-working labourers. A similar study in PSU's in India could help to gain critical insight in these issues.

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