

WHAT INFLUENCE EMPLOYEES' INTENTION TO JOIN A UNION?

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1. INTRODUCTION

The trade union is one of the independent organisations that play a crucial role in protecting employment rights and interests. Employee rights include terms and conditions of employment, such as wages, welfare, and security matters. Hodder and Edwards (2015) defined a trade union as an independent organisation created by workers to achieve common objectives such as better job benefits. Their roles including maintaining and improving employment conditions, environments, and conditions and exercise their rights to achieve employee goals and needs (Bushiri, 2014). In Malaysia, trade unions play a function that important in the industrial relations agenda involving mutual relations between employers and employees.

Issues related to employees' welfare and rights have been the common interest of much foreign research aiming to understand trade unions' effectiveness (Goerke, 2020; Yao, 2013; Shrestha, 2012; Moeti-Lysson & Ongori, 2011). In the context of Malaysia, previous research have focused on government policies regarding the trade unions (Mahadirin Ahmad, Sabariah Kee Mohd Yussof & Nor Syakirah Zakaria, 2019), employers and employees attitude and perception on union effectiveness (Tarumaraja, Fatimah Wati Halim & Fatimah Omar, 2017; Hazrul Shahiri, Zulkifly Osman & Park, 2016; Raduan Che Rose, Kumar & Ramasamy, 2011), women in trade unions (Rohana Ariffin, 2007; Crinis, 2003), trade union growth (Fatimah Said, Roza Hazli Zakaria & Saad Mohd. Said, 2002) and trade union leadership during world economy crisis (Che Wan Takwa Che Wan Abu Bakar, 2008). However, Malaysian trade union membership experienced a small growth percentage over seven years. Based on the Department of Union Affairs (2019), the number of union membership as of July 2019 was only at 930,790, with only 759 registered trade unions in Malaysia. The Starbucks Workers Union is a trade union formed by members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). In a larger context, trade unions serve as an institution to balance the employer's power and government power. Employees join unions out of a desire to be represented. Employees believe that unions can improve their economy or well-being by increasing wages and better benefit facilities. The employee also believes that unions can protect them from discriminatory and unfair treatment by management. Therefore, the study aims to know how many employees join a union and what factors influence their intention to join it.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted using the quantitative approach to investigate the factors influencing participation in trade unions among employees at Starbucks branches in the

Petaling Jaya. The total population of this study is 1200 Starbucks employees (Izzati, 2019). Since the total population is 1200 thus, the sample size needed is 290 as the respondent for this study as proposed by Krejcie and Morgan in the Table for sample size. The researcher distributed to 290 targeted respondents using the systematic sampling technique. The samples were taken from each Starbucks branch in the Petaling Jaya district by contacting the Starbucks manager to the targeted respondents.

The investigation was to identify the number of Starbucks employees joining a union, find out the reasons for their decision to join or not to join a union, and the relationship between job factor, trade union factor and economic factor, and employees' intention to join a union. The questionnaire comprises three major parts. Part A contained questions regarding the respondent's demographic profiles. Meanwhile, Part B includes questions about factors influencing the intention to join a union. The final section, section C, concentrated on the dependent variable, the intention to join a union. For data analysis, the study uses Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis to answer the objectives of the study.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Out of 290, only 26.5% (77 employees) joined a trade union in this organization. 35 of them (45.4%) join because of perceived benefit from the union, 18 of them (23.3%) joined the union for no reason, 12 of them (15.5%) joined because of influence from a co-worker and their friends. Six (6) of them (7.7%) joined the union due to issues at work and trust in union leadership, respectively (Table 1).

Table 1: Reason Chosen by Employees who are Join a Union

Reason	Number of Respondents	Frequency (%)
Benefit from Union	35	45.4
Issue at Work	6	7.7
Trust in Leadership	6	7.7
Influence from Friends/Co-Worker	12	15.5
No Reason	18	23.3

On the other hand, the findings also revealed that another 73.5 % (213 employees) did not join any union at the workplace. Among the reasons stated was revealed in Table 1. 107 of them (36.9 percent) did not join a trade union simply because they have no interest in doing so. Whereas 78 of them (26.9 percent), did not join because they are not aware of the function of a union, and 62 (21.3%) did not join because they are not aware that a union exists. Twenty-three (23) of them (7.9%) did not join because there was no encouragement to do so from their employer. Twelve of them (4.1%) did not find a union to help serve its intended function, while 8 (2.7%) did not provide any specific reasons. Therefore, we can conclude that majority of the respondents of this study are not a member of any trade union at their workplace.

Table 2: Reason Chosen by Employees who are Not Join a Union

Reasons	Number of Respondents	Frequency (%)
Not aware of The Function of a Union	78	26.90
Not Aware of Union Existence	62	21.38

No Encouragement from Employer	23	7.93
Did Not Find Union Useful	12	4.14
Not Interested	107	36.9

Furthermore, the relationship between job factor, trade union factor, and economic factor and employees' intention to join a union was further analysed in the study. First, findings from correlation research below revealed a significant and positive relationship between job factors and employees' intention to join a union ($r=0.755^{**}$, $p=0.00$). Therefore, H_a was accepted which is there is a significant relationship between job factor and employee intention to join a trade union. Job dissatisfaction and frustration are the main reasons for an individual's desire to join a union (Guest & Dewe, 1988). Trade union offers workers a "collective voice" to employers to eliminate unhappiness (Freeman & Medoff 1984). Second, the following correlation is between trade union factors and employees' intention to join a union ($r=0.777^{**}$, $p=0.00$) Findings show that there is a strong and positive relationship between trade union factors and employees' intention to join a union. Therefore, H_a was accepted which is there is a significant relationship between the trade union factor and employees' intention to join a union and the researcher reject H_o . Thus, a trade union might be considered a 'watch dog' for its members, protecting them from unjust treatment by their employers (Visser, 2019). Finally, the correlation results between the economic factors and employees' intention to join a union revealed a strong and significant positive relationship between the trade union factor and employees' intention to join a union ($r=0.784^*$, $p=0.00$). As such, the union might encourage management to adopt more productive work techniques to maintain their competitiveness and demand more outstanding wages from management (Gill & Meyer, 2013).

Table 3: Pearson Correlational Analysis

Variables		Result
Job Factor	Pearson Correlation	.755**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	290
Trade Union Factor	Pearson Correlation	.777**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	290
Economic Factor	Pearson Correlation	.784**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	290

4. CONCLUSION

In this study, the findings found that all the identified factors influence the employees' intentions to join a union. The factors such as job factors, trade union economic factors influence the employee's intention to join a union in an organisation. The study's findings indicate that each component positively and substantially affects an individual's inclination to join a union. However, in this study, most of the employees of Starbucks do not join a union for various reasons, including lack of interest, ignorance of the union's role, lack of awareness of the union existence, lack of employer encouragement, and a lack of perceived use of the union. The findings also clearly proved that the above factors highly influenced intention whether to join or not to join a union. This study, however, has some limitations, including data collection was done during the pandemic Covid-19, which limits the generalisation of the

findings to a broader scope. The study also provides suggestions for future research to employ other significant variables and qualitative analysis to generate a more in-depth understanding of the issues.

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