

Is It Best to Leave IT Alone? A Study of Employee Attitude Towards Union in Indian IT Services

Asimabha Bhowmick

In a knowledge-driven industry like IT Services where people with higher skills are expected to be better placed and treated well in their organizations, the significance of trade unions is often undermined. While the employers and IT forums and organizations of national importance have generally been averse to unionization, earlier studies revealed quite contradictory perceptions towards unionism amongst IT professionals in India. In the context of new voices of unionization emerging in the US technology sector with Google workers coming together to form a global union alliance in January 2021, this paper examines the attitude of IT professionals in India towards unionization.

Asimabha Bhowmick is a Ph.D candidate in Xavier School of Business (XLRI), Jamshedpur. He is also an Assistant Professor at Institute of Engineering and Management, Kolkata India. E-mail: r19007@astra.xlri.ac.in

Introduction

The Indian IT industry, which started to take shape around the late 60s and early 80s with the two big names, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and later Infosys, has made its mark as a formidable global force over the years. Initially, the industry growth was fuelled by what is termed as “immigration led body-shopping,” an outsourcing/ sub-contracting engagement model based on monetizing the time/hours spent by Indian IT professionals, who mostly traveled from India to developed countries like the US & UK and took over IT support work from the locals. Slowly, it started flourishing more as a cost arbitrage play that saw low-level IT jobs outsourced to India.

In the last four decades, the industry has become a dominant global power, with Indian IT firms creating a niche in providing high technology scalable solutions. Today, some of the world’s most significant innovations, from cutting-edge electronic products to space programs to airline software to billion-dollar apps, all have Indian IT’s stamp on them. Over

the years, as the Indian IT industry has attained a state of ‘maturity’ (Singh & Kaur, 2017), the sector’s growth rates have slowed down. And the industry has been in the news for all the wrong reasons like mass scale layoffs, retrenching employees in the name of role rationalization, cost-cutting, automation, growth plan, and performance appraisal. However, the Ministry of Labor and Employment (Government of India) and NASSCOM (The National Association of Software and Service Companies, a trade association of Indian Information Technology and Business Process Outsourcing industry) have remained mute spectators in this regard. Amidst this apparent institutional apathy, the past decade has seen a renewed interest in bringing IT employees under some organized unions with different unions, namely Forum of IT Employees (FITI), Union of IT & ITES Employees, New Democratic Labor Front IT Employees Wing, All India Forum for IT having mobilized pan India membership of IT Professions.

While there are multiple theories (Revolutionary Theory, Evolutionary Theory, Theory of Industrial Jurisprudence, Rebellion Theory etc. Khanka, 2007) highlighting reasons like collective bargaining, better work condition etc. for the formation of trade unions – there is a general feeling that the IT sector being highly-skilled, people within the sector are not interested in unionization and from an Indian context of unionization – they would rather not get entangled as most of the stimulus come from outside the industry in the form of politically affili-

ated groups trying to gain inroads into the sector. A qualitative study (Dhar, 2012) exploring IT professionals’ perception of trade unionism in the IT industry (based on an assessment in 2006) revealed that 90% of those interviewed were not in favor of union formation. The study highlighted various reasons for the same. Firstly, IT professionals primarily associated unions with blue-collared workers and perceived below their dignity to be bracketed in the same group and preferred to be recognized as ‘Knowledge workers.’ Secondly, the IT professionals rejected the dominant reason for collective bargaining as a premise for union formation. Instead, they preferred to bargain by themselves because they believed more in themselves than in anyone else. Thirdly, they considered that HR in the IT industry is highly professional and is always concerned about employee growth and development, leading to union formation unnecessary. And finally, since the industry was in its growth phase (around 2006) marked with a short supply of IT professionals, issues related to job insecurity were almost non-existent – nullifying the need for union formation.

90% of those interviewed were not in favor of union formation.

Yet, a different quantitative study (Bisht, 2010) found “a whopping 67% of the employees [Indian IT sector] who participated in the survey” to be in favor of organized trade unions. The study highlighted various issues like long working hours, excessive workloads, compensation and appraisal-related issues, job

insecurity, high-stress levels, denial of annual leaves, unrecognized extra efforts, and lack of equal opportunities as concerns driving their opinion in favor of an organized union.

One of the startling outcomes of the post-pandemic world has been a resurgent IT sector in India (Srinath, 2021), with the expectation that the global thrust on digital transformation will lead to the third wave of growth in the industry. But this also coincides with a watershed moment in the history of Silicon Valley when on 4th of Jan 2021, more than 400 employees of Google and its parent organization, Alphabet Inc., announced the creation of “Alphabet Workers Union (AWU)” with the Communications Workers of America (CWA). This union represents workers in telecommunications and media in the United States and Canada. Given the influence that Silicon Valley, a mecca for IT, has on Indian IT firms and anti-union Silicon Valley’s tryst with unionization, it is imperative to see similar trends playing out in the Indian IT sector. Also, in an increasing gig economy playing out in Indian IT, it is interesting to note that AWU has opened its doors to all shades of workers – full-time, temporary, and contract staff. This inclusive gesture has the potential to show how unions could make themselves relevant today. With the renewed interest in unionization and nearing a decade when similar studies

This inclusive gesture has the potential to show how unions could make themselves relevant today.

were undertaken, this paper aims to resolve the earlier differences with inconclusive diametrically opposite views of the past studies through an exploratory study to get an answer to the research questions:

Q1. Do IT Professionals working in the Indian IT Industry support organized unions?

Besides a fresh perspective to assess the attitude towards unionization, the study also intends to determine some finer nuances. First, let us consider the case of professionals working for Indian subsidiaries of foreign IT firms. Suppose we follow the internalization logic of International Business (IB) literature. In that case, we will agree that the primary reason for foreign IT firms (like IBM, Alphabet, Capgemini, Accenture, etc.) setting up subsidiaries in India is to seek resources. One would expect Indian subsidiaries of foreign IT firms to provide the best working conditions to attract the best of skills and provide a support system that would lead to satisfied employees who would not be keen on any form of unionization. Second, one would expect women employees to feel insecure due to lesser representation at the senior level (decision-making authority), thereby having a higher propensity of being favorable to unionization. Also, one would expect folks in a leadership position to be less keen on unionization as they can participate in decision-making (or one would think because of the processes and systems in place). All those bring us to the second key question that the study explores.

Q2. Does the attitude towards unions differ based on i) gender, ii) role, and iii) the origin of the employer organization.

The motivation of this study as such is not only to assess the current attitude of IT professionals in India towards unionization and contrast that with previous studies but also see if the view differs with their gender and role and origin country/region of the employer organization to inform policymakers, corporates, IT forums and unions to work together to ensure that the shine of the IT industry does not lose its luster.

Literature Review

This section seeks to cover the literature and the practice to bring forth the different angles, perspectives, and fragments of realities regarding Unions in Indian IT Services. This section, as such, is a field review, not just a literature review.

The primary functions of unions as outlined by the National Commission on Labor is to secure fair wages for workers, safeguard the security of tenure and improve conditions of service, enlarge opportunities for promotion and training, and improve working and living conditions (Dhal, 2011). Scholars have referred to unions as social organizations that seek to protect and promote workers' economic and non-economic interests both at the workplace and in the larger society (Zhu & Benson, 2008). Noronha and D'Cruz (2016) claim that "over the years, Indian trade unions have acquired an unfavorable perception of behaving irresponsibly, catering to vested [political]

interests, adopting disruptive tactics, neglecting the concerns of members and ignoring the welfare of society at large." They have argued that employers use this negative image in the IT industry to prevent or disrupt organizing efforts by portraying the trade unions as backward, unhelpful, irrelevant, or dangerous. So much so that every time there is an announcement about the IT sector coming under the ambit of labor laws, there is a ruckus about the industry becoming less competitive and employment declining because of the prospect of unionization. Even the National Association of Software and Services Companies, widely known as NASSCOM, an IT industry trade association, has maintained that unions are irrelevant to IT sector as sophisticated HR practices look after employee interests (Noronha & D'Cruz, 2016). But, at the same time, it has also maintained that employees have the right to organize themselves. Industry insiders have highlighted how firms have their internal HR management discuss labor, wage, and harassment issues that curtail the need for any separate union. And there is a general skepticism with the involvement of political parties in the functioning of any unions.

Employers use this negative image in the IT industry to prevent or disrupt organizing efforts by portraying the trade unions as backward, unhelpful, irrelevant, or dangerous.

The Indian IT sector (IT and ITES combined) is worth \$194 billion in FY21,

directly employs four and a half million people as of 2021, and contributes to almost 8% of GDP in 2020 (IBEF, 2021). With such a vast employee base and potential for providing skilled job opportunities to the growing number of technical graduates, it is essential to ensure that the industry offers fair working conditions where workers' rights are protected, and no one gets exploited. We cannot ignore the welfare of employees for a sector that has had an unparalleled impact on the growth and development of India. Besides, one of the main objectives of the trade unions is to put forward ideas across the management and get those converted into well-structured plans through negotiations (Sinha, 2001). Indeed, we should consider it as a constructive force for the industry.

As and when the industry has gone through a major crisis like the financial meltdown of 2008 or whenever the world economy threatened to slip into recession often, the sector responded by retrenchments to trim cost structures, reduce bench strength - usually in the pretext of performance issues or inability to keep with technological changes. Like in 2017 alone, it was reported that more than 56,000 employees were laid off. According to reports - "compared to the normal rate of forced attrition (i.e., asking non-performers to leave) of around 1% in earlier years, 2017 saw Indian IT companies letting go of between 2% and 6% of their employees" (Bhattacharya, 2017). And through these periods of turmoil, there have been a lot of aggrieved IT professionals who have filed legal cases against their employers for unfair

trade practices such as layoffs, extended work hours, etc.

While Industry observers have maintained that demand for unionization in the IT Industry has stemmed chiefly from outside the sector, there has been a growing discontentment within the Industry with IT professionals seeking an apolitical forum to help protect workers' rights. Back in 2000, Left leaders (from outside the sector) had attempted to organize a union for Indian software programmers in Bangalore. But, the move to form a forum did not succeed then as programmers balked at the prospect of joining any union. In 2006, CPM labor arm CITU [notably, again from outside the sector] had tried to form a trade union for the sector in West Bengal, called the West Bengal IT Services Association (Pinak, 2019) but was not able to garner much support. Perhaps because of the political affiliation of the union, it did not appeal to the knowledge workforce. However, this past decade has seen some changes. Internal forces within the IT sector have driven a renewed interest in unions. Different unions, namely Forum of IT Employees (FITI), Union of IT & ITES Employees, New Democratic Labor Front IT Employees Wing, All India Forum for IT, have gained momentum with increased membership across India. IT unions such as FITE started in 2014 when the industry saw mass layoffs. Initially, the membership was limited to a very handful, but that has grown to over 10,000 members as of May 2020, with more than 30,000 followers on Facebook (Moorthy, 2020). FITE's Pune chapter became the first officially registered

trade union for the IT Sector in India by the office of the state Labor Commissioner in December 2017 (Biswas, 2018).

While several theoretical models have thronged the organizing literature, the revitalization of unionism can perhaps be looked at through the mobilization theory (Kelly, 1998) lens that underscores that ‘collectivization’ of a set of individuals requires them to adopt a particular set of beliefs. When we have individuals who believe that their conditions of employment are in some way unjust or unfair, and their employer is either the cause of their employment problems or is responsible for their alleviation and that union action against the employer will be effective and at minimal cost - and all these beliefs are combined into a coherent narrative or ‘collective action frame’ (Kelly, 2015) – it makes for a favorable environment for unionization. Perhaps that explains why union bodies like FITE have become even more relevant today and have taken up the cause of IT Professionals with recent layoffs (in 2020), where reportedly 400+ employees (IT and ITES combined) were laid off at the back of COVID-19 (Ranipeta Shilpa S, 2020). In light of these latest developments, to better understand the trend, it is vital to seek the opinion of practicing IT professionals regarding how they feel about organized unions in the sector in which this study will attempt to do just that.

Method

A convenience survey based on the ‘General Union Attitude’ scale

(McShane, 1986) was administered online using “Qualtrics” software amongst IT professionals (only IT Services and not ITES) across India to assess their attitude towards union. ‘General Union Attitude’ scale (McShane, 1986) has been widely used (Fiorito et al., 2010) (Goeddeke & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2010) and found an effective construct to measure an individual’s opinion toward the concept of unionization. The General Union Attitude scale has eight items (Appendix 1) to measure attitudes of unionism in general. The survey was conducted from Jan 1, 2021, until Apr 30, 2021. Overall, 468 participants had responded. After initial data screening, verifying for completeness, and eliminating all responses with less than 0.3 standard deviations on the seven-point Likert scale responses, we were left with 438 responses. The respondents (n = 438), had IT professionals from the cities of Kolkata (n = 210), Bangalore (n=54), NCR (n = 42), Hyderabad (n = 18), Chennai (n = 12), Mumbai (n = 12), and a few other tier 2 Indian cities (n = 90). Besides, amongst the respondents, 34.25% were females, which incidentally is the same percentage of women in the IT and ITES sector as of FY2017-18 records shared by the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (Gupta, 2020). 36.99% of the respondents were “individual contributors,” with the remaining 62.01% playing some managerial role. Also, 56.16%, 35.62%, and 8.22% of the respondents were respectively from IT Services firms based out of India, Indian subsidiaries of firms originated in “North America & Canada,” and Indian

subsidiaries of firms originated in “Rest of World (including Europe & Middle East)”. About 86.3% of respondents were from large organizations (annual revenue > 25 Crores INR and employees > 1000), and the remaining 13.7% were from Medium & Small enterprises. The demography of the survey respondents is presented in Appendix 2.

Although the ‘General Union Attitude’ is a widely recognized scale, we performed principal component analysis (PCA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (Levine et al., 2006) using the survey data to validate a single interpretable factor of the scale. Before analysis, four negatively worded items (e.g., “If I had to choose, I would probably be a member of any organized labor union.”, “People would be just as well off if there were no unions in the IT Sector in India.”, “Unions are an embarrassment to our society.”, “Most people are better off without labor unions.”) were reverse coded. PCA of the survey data confirmed a single interpretable factor with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, explaining 53.51% of the variation with a KMO of 0.879 (KMO > 0.8 indicates the adequacy of sample size). CFA with Goodness of Fit (GFI) of 0.921, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) of 0.913, Normed Fit Indices (NFI) of 0.902, and Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) of 0.879 confirmed a good fit for the measurement model/scale.

We took an average of the recoded seven-point ‘Likert’ scale responses (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = neither agree nor disagree, 5 = somewhat

agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree) and considered all scores above 3.5 as favorable to Union in IT and below 3.5 as unfavorable.

Results

An overwhelming 79.45% of the IT professionals who took part in the survey were favorably disposed towards union in IT, increasing over 12% from the earlier study done in 2010 (Bisht, 2010). Tables 1 -3 show the cross-tabulation of union with respect to preference based on role (individual or lead), gender, and employer’s country of origin, respectively. The three different cross-tabulation show that respondents support union in IT irrespective of the slicing.

An overwhelming 79.45% of the IT professionals who took part in the survey were favorably disposed towards.

Further analysis was done by taking averages of each survey item (on the seven-point ‘Likert’ scale mentioned earlier) and their average score. To test the hypotheses that based on i) gender, ii) role, and iii) the origin of the employer organization, attitude towards union differ, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run on the means of each survey item grouped by gender, role and the origin of the employer organization.

Results indicated that only for the first survey item, i.e., “Unions are a positive force in this country,” male and female participants had significant differ-

Table 1 Preference for Trade Union: Role Cross Tabulation

		Role		Total	
		Individual	Lead		
Prefer Trade Union	No	Count	42	48	90
		% Within Prefer Trade Union	46.7	53.3	100.0
		% Within Role	25.9	17.4	20.5
		% Of Total	9.6	11.0	20.5
	Yes	Count	120	228	348
		% Within Prefer Trade Union	34.5	65.5	100.0
		% Within Role	74.1	82.6	79.5
		% Of Total	27.4	52.1	79.5
	Total	Count	162	276	438
		% Within Prefer Trade Union	37.0	63.0	100.0
		% Within Role	100.0	100.0	100.0
		% Of Total	37.0	63.0	100.0

Table 2 Preference for Trade Union: Gender Cross Tabulation

		Gender		Total	
		Female	Male		
Prefer Trade Union	No	Count	30	60	90
		% Within Prefer Trade Union	33.3	66.7	100.0
		% Within Gender	20.0	20.8	20.5
		% Of Total	6.8	13.7	20.5
	Yes	Count	120	228	348
		% Within Prefer Trade Union	34.5	65.5	100.0
		% Within Gender	80.0	79.2	79.5
		% Of Total	27.4	52.1	79.5
	Total	Count	150	288	438
		% Within Prefer Trade Union	34.2	65.8	100.0
		% Within Gender	100.0	100.0	100.0
		% Of Total	34.2	65.8	100.0

ences in their mean survey responses. Groups based on participant ‘roles’ (‘independent contributor’ and ‘lead’) had no significant differences in any of the means of survey items. As for the perception differences based on ‘origin of the employer firms,’ (‘India,’ ‘North America and Canada’, and ‘Rest of World (ROW)’), item 2, i.e., “If I had to choose, I would probably not be a member of any organized labor union” and item 6, i.e., “I am proud of the labor

movement in this country”, only had significant differences in the means of the survey item.

Besides the quantitative part of the survey, we had also asked respondents to provide feedback regarding their stand towards union in IT optionally. The views against unionization questioned the ability of the unions to provide “job security” and outright rejected the need for unions, saying that “Labor unions are more

Table 3 Preference for Trade Union: Organization Origin Cross Tabulation

		Organization-Origin			Total	
		India	NA & Canada	ROW*		
Prefer Trade Union	No	Count	36	54	0	90
		% Within Prefer Trade Union	40.0	60.0	0.0	100.0
		% Within Organization-Origin	14.6	34.6	0.0	20.5
		% Of Total	8.2	12.3	0.0	20.5
	Yes	Count	210	102	36	348
		% Within Prefer Trade Union	60.3	29.3	10.3	100.0
		% Within Organization-Origin	85.4	65.4	100.0	79.5
		% Of Total	47.9	23.3	8.2	79.5
	Total	Count	246	156	36	438
		% Within Prefer Trade Union	56.2	35.6	8.2	100.0
		% Within Organization-Origin	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
		% Of Total	56.2	35.6	8.2	100.0

*ROW: Rest of World (including the Middle East & Europe)

Table 4. Group Means (Standard Deviations) & ANOVA Results for Differences Between Groups Based on Gender

Item#	Survey Item	Male (n=288) Group means (SDs)	Female (n=150) Group means(SDs)	F value	P value
1	Unions are a positive force in this country	4.46 (1.69)	5.4 (1.56)	5.393	0.023*
2	If I had to choose, I would probably not be a member of any organized labor union.	3.44 (1.92)	3.8 (1.98)	0.573	0.452
3	I am glad that labor unions have made inroads into the IT Sector in India.	4.5 (1.61)	4.68 (1.87)	0.184	0.669
4	People would be just as well off if there were no unions in the IT Sector in India.	3.88 (1.77)	3.84 (2.01)	0.006	0.939
5	Unions are an embarrassment to our society.	4.75 (1.67)	4.96 (1.67)	0.26	0.612
6	I am proud of the labor movement in this country.	4.88 (1.54)	5.2 (1.23)	0.837	0.363
7	Most people are better off without labor unions.	4.06 (1.67)	3.96 (1.72)	0.061	0.806
8	Employees are considerably better off when they belong to a labor union.	4.54 (1.58)	4.4 (1.41)	0.141	0.708
	AvgGUAScore	4.31 (1.29)	4.53 (1.11)	0.513	0.476

Note: Column report means (and standard deviation) of the respective groups for each survey item (as well as their average) on a scale of 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = neither agree nor disagree, 5 = somewhat agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree. Table column 5 reports F value from one-way ANOVA. p values in column 6 below 0.05 indicate differences between the group means.

Table 5 Group Means (Standard Deviations) & ANOVA Results for Differences Between Groups Based on Role

Item#	Survey Item	Individual (n=162) Group means(SDs)	Lead (n=276) Group means(SDs)	F value	P value
1	Unions are a positive force in this country	5.11 (1.81)	4.59 (1.61)	1.644	0.204
2	If I had to choose, I would probably not be a member of any organized labor union.	3.78 (1.99)	3.43 (1.92)	0.53	0.469
3	I am glad that labor unions have made inroads into the IT Sector in India.	4.52 (1.83)	4.59 (1.63)	0.027	0.869
4	People would be just as well off if there were no unions in the IT Sector in India.	3.70 (1.92)	3.96 (1.81)	0.317	0.575
5	Unions are an embarrassment to our society.	4.52 (1.67)	5.00 (1.65)	1.438	0.234
6	I am proud of the labor movement in this country.	5.11 (1.19)	4.91 (1.58)	0.32	0.574
7	Most people are better off without labor unions.	3.67 (1.71)	4.24 (1.64)	2.016	0.16
8	Employees are considerably better off when they belong to a labor union.	4.93 (1.39)	4.24 (1.55)	3.601	0.062
	Avg GUAScore	4.42 (1.18)	4.37 (1.27)	0.025	0.876

Note: Column report means (and standard deviation) of the respective groups for each survey item (as well as their average) on a scale of 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = neither agree nor disagree, 5 = somewhat agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree. Table column 5 reports F value from one-way ANOVA. p values in column 6 below 0.05 indicate differences between the group means.

Concerns about the integrity of the unions (if the ‘union’ is an honest one) raise the need on the part of the ‘unions’ to focus on building its credibility within the IT fraternity.

needed where the workforce is low to medium-skilled.” We could classify the favorable feedback under the following broad themes as probable value additions of unionization in IT. Unions can provide for a) job security, b) better working conditions, c) workers’ rights, d) employee welfare, e) grievance redressal, and f) shaping organization policies/ setting standards of skill level,

wages, working conditions. It’s worth noting that even amongst the favorable responses, concerns about the integrity of the unions (if the ‘union’ is an honest one) raise the need on the part of the ‘unions’ to focus on building its credibility within the IT fraternity.

Discussion

While this study is exploratory in nature, we intended to reconcile the diagonally opposite views regarding the attitude of IT professionals towards unionization of the Indian IT as per the extant studies done at the beginning of the earlier decade, against the backdrop of anecdotal evidence showing an increasing trend to-

Table 6 Group Means (Standard Deviations) and ANOVA Results for Differences Between Groups Based on Organization-Origin

Item#	Survey Item	India (n=246) Group means(SDs)	NA& Canada (n=156) Group means (SDs)	ROW (n=36) Group means (SDs)	F value	P value
1	Unions are a positive force in this country	5.0 (1.6)	4.5 (1.8)	4.7 (1.9)	0.64	0.53
2	If I had to choose, I would probably not be a member of any organized labor union.	4.0 (2.0)	2.8 (1.6)	4.2 (2.0)	3.66	0.03*
3	I am glad that labor unions have made inroads into the IT Sector in India.	4.8 (1.7)	4.2 (1.7)	4.5 (1.6)	0.84	0.44
4	People would be just as well off if there were no unions in the IT Sector in India.	4.2 (1.8)	3.2 (1.8)	4.5 (1.5)	2.89	0.06
5	Unions are an embarrassment to our society.	4.9 (1.7)	4.5 (1.7)	5.7 (1.4)	1.33	0.27
6	I am proud of the labor movement in this country.	5.2 (1.4)	4.4 (1.4)	5.8 (1.2)	3.86	0.03*
7	Most people are better off without labor unions.	4.1 (1.8)	3.8 (1.6)	5.0 (1.1)	1.34	0.27
8	Employees are considerably better off when they belong to a labor union.	4.8 (1.5)	4.1 (1.5)	4.2 (1.2)	2.03	0.14
	AvgGUA Score	4.6 (1.1)	4.5 (1.4)	4.8 (0.5)	2.99	0.06

Column report means (and standard deviation) of the respective groups for each survey item (as well as their average) on a scale of 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = neither agree nor disagree, 5 = somewhat agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree. Table column 6 reports F value from one-way ANOVA. p values in column 7 below 0.05 indicate differences between the group means.

wards unionization. This study unambiguously suggests that Indian IT professionals, irrespective of their role, gender, or origin of their employer, support unions at the current juncture. Given that the Indian IT industry has changed the image of India and brought it to the forefront of defining new India and continues to be a large source of employment for a skilled workforce, government and industry bodies must take cognizance of this rising interest towards unionization

amongst IT professionals and be respectful for all fundamental principles and rights at work (FPRW), including freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. And as for the burgeoning number of unions trying to unite IT professionals and the impact of unionization in the US IT industry, they need to play a constructive role to help strengthen the employment relationship while ensuring adequate protection to all IT professionals.

A recent report by Goldman Sachs indicates that COVID-19 might trigger a third wave of outsourcing for the Indian IT industry, with more technology roles likely to move to India (Ishwar, 2020). And as 'work from anywhere' becomes the new accepted 'normal' (more so in the IT Services industry), we can expect changes in the 'employee' and 'employer' relationships. Unions have to further assess their organizing and advocacy strategies with the development of digital online platform markets in which pay, hours, rights, and obligations are no longer defined or bound by such associations. In the backdrop of this changing structure of employment in the IT Services sector, future research can explore how IT unions, government, and industry bodies can support the IT professionals through the transitions they face during their working lives, provide them access to lifelong learning and ensure that they have access to adequate social protection.

References

- Bhattacharya, A. (2017), "Indian IT Layoffs in 2017 Top 56,000, Led by Infosys and Cognizant — Quartz IndiF", <https://qz.com/india/1152683/indian-it-layoffs-in-2017-top-56000-led-by-tcs-infosys-cognizant/>
- Bisht, N. S. (2010), "Trade Unions in Indian IT Industry? An Employees' Perspective", *The Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, 46(2): 220–29.
- Biswas, P. (2018), "India's First IT Trade Union Registered in Pune, Aims to Fight 'illegal layoffs.'" *The Indian Express*, <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/pune/indias-first-it-trade-union-registered-in-pune-aims-to-fight-illegal-layoffs-5023587/>
- Dhal, M. (2011), "Changing Power of Union in India: A Study of Actors' Perception.", *International Journal of Human Resource Studies*, 1(2): 111. <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijhrs.v1i2.1117>
- Dhar, R. L. (2012). "Trade Unionism in the Information Technology (IT) Industry: An Employee's Perspective", *Work*, 42(4): 481–93. <https://doi.org/10.3233/WOR-2012-1425>
- Fiorito, J., Gall, G. & Martinez, A. D. (2010), "Activism and Willingness to Help in Union :Organizing: Who Are the Activists?" *Journal of Labor Research*, 31(3): 263–84. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12122-010-9092-3>
- Goeddeke, F. X. & Kammeyer-Mueller, J. D. (2010), "Perceived Support in a Dual organizational Environment: Union Participation in a University Setting", *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 31(1): 65–83. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.629>
- Gupta, N. (2020), "Indian IT Industry Attracts More Women, But Many Exit Within First 5 Years in the Job", *The Print*. <https://theprint.in/pageturner/excerpt/indian-it-industry-attracts-more-women-but-many-exit-within-first-5-years-in-the-job/368504/>
- IBEF (2021), *It & bpm, India Brand Equity Foundation*, November.
- Ishwar, S. (2020), "Covid-19 May Trigger Third Wave of Outsourcing for Indian IT Industry" | Business Standard News, *Business Standard*. https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/covid-19-may-trigger-third-wave-of-outsourcing-for-indian-it-industry-120083101244_1.html
- Kelly, J. (1998), "Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long Waves" in R. Delbridge & E. Heery (eds.). <http://www.crcnetbase.com/doi/10.1201/>
- Kelly, J. (2015), "Trade Union Membership and Power in Comparative Perspective", *The Economic and Labor Relations Review*,

- 26(4): 526–44. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1035304615614445>
- Khanka, S. S. (2007), Human Resource Management. S. Chand Limited. <https://books.google.co.in/books?id=vEhLAGAAQBAJ>
- Levine, T., Hullett, C. R., Turner, M. M. & Lapinski, M. K. (2006), “The Desirability of Using Confirmatory Factor Analysis on Published Scales”, *Communication Research Reports*, 23(4): 309–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08824090600962698>
- McShane, S. L. (1986), “General Union Attitude: A Construct Validation”, *Journal of Labor Research*, 7(4), 403–17. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03179668>
- Moorthy, S. (2020), “IT Unions Have Gained Traction in the Recent Times, But Where Will This Lead to?” Moneycontrol. <https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/business/it-unions-have-gained-traction-in-the-recent-times-but-where-will-this-lead-to-5246981.html>
- Noronha, E. & D’Cruz, P. (2016), “IT Industry Unionisation: Don’t Panic – Unions Don’t Mean Strikes, They Offer a Collective Voice”, *Scroll.In*. <https://scroll.in/article/811635/it-industry-unionisation-dont-panic-unions-dont-mean-strikes-they-offer-a-collective-voice>
- Pinak, G. (2019), “Shot at Information Technology Sector Trade union in Bengal”-. *Telegraph India*. <https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/shot-at-information-technology-sector-trade-union-in-bengal/cid/1693004>
- Ranipeta Shilpa S. (2020), “COVID-19 Impact: A List of Companies That Have Laid off Employees Amid the Pandemic”, *The News Minute*, <https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/covid-19-impact-list-companies-have-laid-off-employees-amid-pandemic-125473>
- Singh, I. & Kaur, N. (2017), “Contribution of Information Technology in Growth of Indian Economy”. *International Journal of Research -GRANTHAALAYAH*, 5(6): 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.29121/granthaalayah.v5.i6.2017.1986>
- Sinha, C. (2001), “Role of Trade Unions in Developing a Culture of High Performance”, in *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, 37(1):181-85 , <https://doi.org/10.2307/27767771>
- Srinath, S. (2021), “Tech Industry Leading India’s Recovery Post Covid”, *The Financial Express*. <https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/technology/tech-industry-leading-indias-recovery-post-covid/2196681/>
- Zhu, Y.& Benson, J. (2008), Trade unions in Asia , <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203926499.ch15>

Appendix 1 Measurement Scale

Construct	Item #	Items	Source
General Union Attitude (GUA)	1	Unions are a positive force in this country	(McShane, 1986)
	2	If I had to choose, I would probably not be a member of any organized labor union.	
	3	I am glad that labour unions have made inroads into the IT Sector in India.	
	4	People would be just as well off if there were no unions in the IT Sector in India.	
	5	Unions are an embarrassment to our society.	
	6	I am proud of the labour movement in this country.	
	7	Most people are better off without labour unions.	
	8	Employees are considerably better off when they belong to a labour union.	

Appendix 2 Demography of Survey respondents

Table 1: Gender

Gender	Percentage (%)
Female	34.25
Male	65.75

Table 2: Role

Role	Percentage (%)
Individual contributor	36.99
Mid-level Manager	34.25
Senior Leadership	9.59
Team Leader	19.18

Table 3: Age

Age	Percentage (%)
20-25 years	2.74
25-30 years	21.92
30-35 years	17.81
35-40 years	19.18
40-50 years	35.62
50+ years	2.74

Table 4: Origin of IT firms

Location	Percentage (%)
India	56.16
North America & Canada	35.62
Europe & Middle East & rest of world	8.22

Table 5: Organization Size (based on employee count)

Organization Size (Rev)	Percentage (%)
Large (≥ 1000 employees)	86.30
Medium (> 100 employees and ≤ 999 employees)	5.48
Small (≤ 100 employees)	8.22

Table 6: Organization Size (based on annual revenue)

Organization Size (Rev)	Percentage (%)
Large (> 250 Crores INR)	76.71
Medium (> 75 Crores INR and ≤ 250 Crores INR)	15.07
Small & Micro (≤ 75 Crores INR)	8.22