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Paper: Transformability

Union politicization in Sri Lanka: Dimensions and Measurement

Though trade unions are mostly viewed as employee organizations protecting employees' interests, they have political dimensions too. Politicization of employee unions has added extra complexity not only to their behavior, but also to their impact on organizations in industrial relations. Unions engage in political activities to increase their influencing power, as strategy for mobilizing more members for union activities and balance power with management.

Researchers have identified two dimensions of union politicization: namely, political instrumentality and political ideology. Political instrumentality is the perception of union members of how far political activities of the union benefit them. On the other hand, political belief is the degree of belief members have of a political role in society other than their economic role. Further, political belief of the union member is of two types; left-wing and right-wing political. It is claimed that employees with left-wing political ideology are more likely to join unions and are committed to union activities than employees with right-wing political ideology.

Measurement of union politicization should incorporate both the political instrumentality and political ideology dimensions of union politicization. However, past researchers have used either the political instrumentality or political ideology in measuring union politicization, depending on their research context. Anyway, both dimensions are required to be taken for measuring union politicizations in contexts, where both dimensions are observed.

It is intended to test the goodness of measure of union politicization developed by adapting an 8 item political instrumentality measure and 5 item political belief of British Attitudes Survey in a Sri Lankan Context. Results and implications are to be discussed so that they can be used for future research on union politicization.

Keywords: Union Politicization, Political Instrumentality, Political Belief and Measurement