

FACTORS INFLUENCING UNION PARTICIPATION

by

LOH SU LENG
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LOH SU LENG

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ABSTRAK

Kajian ini dijalankan untuk menyiasat faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi penyertaan pekerja-pekerja dalam aktiviti-aktiviti kesatuan sekerja di sebuah kilang tekstil Jepun di Pulau Pinang, Malaysia. Data telah dikumpulkan dari sampel seramai 230 orang pekerja daripada jumlah 690 orang pekerja-pekerja di kilang tersebut melalui soal-selidik. Jawapan daripada 44 soal-selidik yang lengkap dianalisis. Perasaan puas hati intrinsik (dalaman) dengan pekerjaan didapati ada kaitan negatif yang penting dengan penyertaan ahli kesatuan sekerja dalam aktiviti-aktiviti kesatuan biasa (tidak berjawatan), manakala jantina (lelaki) didapati ada kaitan positif yang penting dalam penyertaan ahli kesatuan dalam aktiviti-aktiviti ahli jawatankuasa kesatuan sekerja. Faktor-faktor lain yang ada kaitan positif tetapi tidak penting dengan kedua jenis penyertaan dalam aktiviti-aktiviti kesatuan sekerja, iaitu aktiviti biasa dan aktiviti ahli jawatankuasa ialah : umur, taraf pendidikan, masa berkhidmat dengan majikan, masa berjawatan, bilangan anak-anak yang di tanggung, dan pengaruh dalam keputusan mengenai pekerjaan. Faktor-faktor yang ada kaitan negatif (tetapi tidak penting) dengan kedua jenis penyertaan dalam aktiviti kesatuan sekerja yang tersebut di atas ialah : perasaan puas hati ekstrinsik (extrinsic) dengan pekerjaan, anggapan responden atas kehandalan kesatuan sekerja dalam menguruskan fungsi-fungsinya dan kepercayaan bahawa parti politik boleh menyelesaikan masalah pekerja. Faktor-faktor ekstrinsik telah disenaraikan oleh responden sebagai sebab-sebab yang terpenting untuk menjadi ahli kesatuan sekerja.

ABSTRACT

The study investigated the factors influencing union participation amongst workers of a well established Japanese textile factory in Penang, Malaysia. Data was collected using survey questionnaires. 230 employees were surveyed from a total of 690. 44 valid questionnaires returned by respondents were analyzed. Intrinsic job satisfaction was found to have significant negative relationship with non-administrative participation (ordinary member), whereas gender (male) was found to have a significant positive relationship with participation in union administration (committee activities). Other factors which were found to have insignificant but positive relation with participation with both ordinary member and committee activities were : age, education , the number of dependent children, job and company tenure and involvement in decision making. Factors which were found to have insignificant but negative relation with participation in ordinary member and committee member activities were: extrinsic job satisfaction, perceived union effectiveness by respondent and believing that political parties are instrumental in solving workers problems. The extrinsic factors were ranked by respondents as the most important reasons for joining trade union.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Union activities can affect not only the long-term viability of an organization but also to a large extent determine the economic well-being of a nation and its competitiveness in the global front. It is therefore a subject of great importance not only to academics and managers but also to the government and the general public.

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

Unionism has been a subject of major concern to business owners, managers, governments and the general public, both in the East and the West. The cause for concern was mainly due to the fact that unions have often been associated with wage increases and inflationary pressures. Unions have traditionally played the instrumental role as negotiators for better tangible benefits for employees, the famous statement by Samuel Gompers , president of Congress of Industrial Organization of United States that, “what the union want is more”, clearly highlights the bread-and-butter approach of unions (Lawler & Mohrman, 1987).

As a result of conflicting interests between union and management, union-management relationships have traditionally been adversarial in most countries. Industrial actions taken as a result of disputes between union and management such as strikes, lock-outs and go-slows often means substantial losses to both employees

and employers.

In severe cases, such disputes may even put a nation's economy on a standstill, especially when it involves essential industries. The strike by workers in the steel industry of United States in 1952 cost the nation four billion(US\$) in terms of lost production, including the wages of 1.4 million workers employed outside the steel industry (Richardson, 1954).

In 1987, the United States government reviewed the duty free import privilege given to Malaysia under the Generalized System of Preference (GSP) over the Malaysian government's refusal to allow unions in the electronics industry (Grace, 1990). The action by the United States Government, was the result of pressure from AFL-CIO. The Malaysian government consented to the formation of in-house unions in the electronics industry in 1990 (Rohana, 1991). Had the GSP been removed, it would have resulted in the withdrawal of many foreign investors who had invested in Malaysia to take advantage of the GSP privilege granted to Malaysia by the United States government. The outcome would most likely mean great economic losses to both the nation and thousands of employees.

The examples cited above highlighted the importance of good union-management relations. Unions are after all, organizations that are made up of members who also happen to be employees of other organizations. The vital link between unions and management are the employees. It is felt that if employees' needs are better understood and appropriate measures are taken to satisfy more of these needs by management, many industrial disputes would have been avoided. In fact, many

managers deserve the type of unions they have to deal with, because if appropriate approaches to managing employer-employee relations have been adopted by satisfying more aspects of employees' needs, the unions would have little role to play (Lawler & Mohrman, 1987).

1.2 SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The need for employees to join a union is considered a crucial aspect in the management of employer-employee relations. Therefore, one of the most appropriate ways to study some of the needs of employees, is to look into how they view the trade unions, why they join trade unions and what are the factors that influence their participation in union activities (Guest & Dewe, 1988). Therefore, individual union members was the focus of the study. The study examined the factors that influence an employee's participation in various union activities, such as joining the union and taking part in union voting and meetings. The study also looked into these factors from a union member's perspective. Amongst the questions which the study sought to answer were:

1. What are the reasons that a worker consider important in joining a union?
2. What effect does demographic factors such as gender, age, education and job status have on union participation ?
3. Does satisfaction with various aspects of jobs such as pay, working conditions and the nature of work affect a member's participation in union activities?
4. Does satisfaction with union's effectiveness in various aspects such as pay

negotiation, in settling grievances and in channeling information to members determine the level of participation in various activities?

5. Does believing that union is instrumental in improving employment necessarily increase the level of members' involvement in union activities?
6. Do employees take part in union activities because they have little involvement in decision making with regard to their jobs?
7. What effects do social-political ideology have on members who participate in union activities?

It was hoped that the study could provide answers to these questions and could contribute to some knowledge in the area of union-management relations.

1.3 DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

Key terms often used in the subject area are defined as follows:

1.3.1 Definition of Trade Union

Trade unions are essentially associations of workpeople formed to safeguard and improve the working conditions of their members and more generally to raise their status and promote their vocational interest (Richardson, 1954).

1.3.2 Definition of Closed Shop Policy

It is a situation where members of particular union may be employed in a workplace, the practice of such policy is widespread in the United States where agreement has been reached between employers and unions (Richardson, 1954).

1.3.3 In-House Union

In-house unions are trade unions where membership is confined to a place of employment (Trade Union Act 1959, Malaysia).

1.3.4 Strike

It means cessation of work by a group of employees acting in agreement (Richardson, 1954).

1.3.5 Lock-out

Action by employers in refusing employment to employees (Richardson, 1954).

1.3.6 Administrative Activities

Activities which involves committee members of union such as attending committee meetings.

1.3.7 Non-administrative Activities

Activities which all union members are eligible to participate such as attending general and national meetings and voting .

1.3.8 AFL-CIO

American Federation of Labor - Congress of industrial organization, it is the equivalent of, Malaysian Trade union Congress.

1.3.9 MTUC

Malaysian Trade Union Congress which is an association of all trade unions in the private sector.

1.4 DESIGN OF INVESTIGATION

This was a cross sectional study based on union members as unit of analysis, using survey research method.

1.4.1 Overview of Subjects Studied

230 out of 690 employees of a well-established textile factory with an established union in Penang, Malaysia, were surveyed.

1.4.2 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed using well validated items widely used by researchers in the past such as the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaires developed by Weiss, Dawis, England & Lofquist (1967).

Since most studies in this area were done in the West, and there could be factors which were unique to the Malaysian setting, therefore officials of Malaysian Trade Union Congress (MTUC), the Trade Union Department and the Malaysian Employers Federation were interviewed as part of the questionnaire development exercise. The questionnaire was piloted on a small sample of employees in a separate setting and was corrected and fully translated into Bahasa Malaysia before being administered.

230 questionnaires were personally distributed and collected at prearranged times and dates over one month period. 48 employees responded.(See Appendix 1 for a copy of the questionnaire).

1.4.3 Statistical Techniques

Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data collected. Correlation analysis, Regression analysis, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and T-tests were used to analyze the data and the results are discussed in Chapter four.

1.4.4 Features of the Study

The study was different from most studies done in the past because it focused on union members who join a union on a voluntary basis in the absence of a closed shop agreement and is in a setting where the unionization rate was very high.

Unlike many other studies, the population was neither male nor female dominated.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Member participation in union activity has received considerable attention during the “Golden Age” of union governance research in the 1950’s, a substantial amount of studies were done in the United States and United Kingdom. However, so far, limited work has been done on the subject in Malaysia. A brief account of trade union movement and its history is therefore necessary to understand the study setting.

2.1 TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN MALAYSIA

Trade unionism began in Malaysia in the 1880’s in the form of guilds similar in concept to the craftsmen guilds of Europe (Zaidi, 1964). It was the Chinese migrant workers who started forming such guilds to protect the interests of both employees and employers. The British government saw these organizations as forerunners of Labor Movement . Fearing the potential threat that such a movement might have, the colonial government began to regulate the activities of such organizations via the Societies Ordinance of 1889 and 1895. The initial registration of these societies took place in 1928 in order for the government to tighten control over their activities.

The Malaysian Communist Party was mainly responsible in getting the trade unions

organized in order to enlist the help of trade unions in its political struggles against the British administration and the Japanese during the Japanese Occupation of Malaysia (Zaidi, 1964).

As in countries in the West, the Malaysian government and employers in general do not view trade unions favorably. This is particularly true amongst multinationals (Rohana & Lochhead, 1988 and Grace, 1990).

While freedom of association is provided for under the Trade Union Act 1959, which means participation in any trade union is voluntary. However, closed shops are considered illegal, and in certain industries only in-house unions are allowed. Issues about unionization of electronics industries, particularly those involving multinational corporations were the focus of studies by researchers (Rohana & Lochhead, 1988, Grace 1990 and Rohana, 1991) these studies also focused on issues relating to female membership in trade unions and the attitudes employers and the Malaysian government towards trade unions.

The Trade Union Act 1959 was amended in 1969 to separate politics from trade union by prohibiting office bearers of political parties from holding office or be employed in trade unions.

As at the end of 1994, trade unions represented less than 10% of the Malaysian workforce. As discussed in chapter one, the number may be insignificant the influence of trade unions can still be felt in areas such as wage policy and social

issues. Issues which are related to union or industrial relations are reported in the Malaysian newspaper almost daily.

A breakdown in trade union organizations and their members in 1991 and 1994 are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Union Membership in Malaysia 1991 & 1994

SECTOR	NUMBER OF UNIONS		MEMBERSHIP	
	1991	1994	1991	1994
PRIVATE	241	281	362,892	384,867
STATUTORY BODIES	85	87	88,823	88,609
GOVERNMENT	135	133	204,920	255,892
SUB-TOTAL	461	501	656,635	699,373
EMPLOYERS UNION	18	16	644	616
FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS	3	4	-	-
TOTAL	472	521	657,279	699,989
TOTAL LABOR FORCE			6.8 million	7.8 million
% UNIONIZED			9.7%	8.9%

Sources : Figures extracted from annual reports of Department of Trade Unions and Bank Negara 1991 & 1994.

2.2 HISTORY OF RESEARCH ON THE SUBJECT

Unions and union government were the subjects of great interest not only to the general public but also to researchers of various disciplines between 1945 to 1960.

It was an era which many considered the Golden Age of Industrial Relations (Strauss, 1977).

The focus of attention during the Golden Age, was on union government and what went on within the unions for most researchers, regardless of the discipline they were from (Strauss, 1977).

Much of the pioneering studies on unions were carried out in the United States. Examples of earlier works were those of Bakke (1945), Seidman *et al.* (1951) Strauss *et al.* (1952) and Uphoff and Dunnette (1956).

In the late 1970's and early 1980's, there was a new wave of research interest in union growth with emphasis on attitudinal factors as predictors of union participation. Examples of studies done in this area were those of Biogness(1978), Farber and Saks (1980), Glick *et al.* (1977), Hamner and Smith (1978), Kochan (1979) and Schriesheim (1978). The use of multivariate approach was emphasized in most of the studies.

In the late 1980's a renewed interest in union participation was again observed especially amongst psychologist and social psychologist, findings of Klandermans (1986), McShane (1986), Snyder *et al.* (1986) and Guest and Dewe (1988) were frequently cited by many later researchers and these studies also emphasized the use of multivariate approach (Anderson, 1978). Few recent studies in Malaysia were based on individual as unit of analysis in examining union membership, and no literature was available on studies which were made based on psychological or social-psychological perspective.

2.3 REVIEW OF KEY STUDIES

Most of the cross sectional studies reviewed, focused on union members and their population sizes varied from below 100 to over 10,000. Three broad categories of research methods were used in past studies. However, theoretical foundations were lacking in some studies (Klandermans, 1986 and Snyder *et al.*, 1986). Three theoretical explanations to union participation was suggested by Klandermans (1986) and was validated by Guest and Dewe (1988).

2.3.1 Populations and Samples

The table below summarizes the population and sample sizes of some key studies:

Table 2. Summary of Population and Samples of Key Studies

Author	Population	Population Size	Sample Size
Bigoness (1978)	Faculty members	539	222
Schriesheim (1978)	Production workers	64	59
Kochan (1979)	Public Poll	1515	804
Nicholson <i>et al.</i> (1981)	Government Officers Association	6000	2,053
McShane (1986)	Municipal Council union	600	297
Snyder <i>et al.</i> (1986)	Members of a Social Service Organization	Total surveyed = 937	525
Kuruvilla <i>et al.</i> (1990)	18 Different Companies	Total surveyed = 9,459	7,390

All of the above used self-administered questionnaires. Nicholson *et al.*(1981), McShane (1986) and Kuruvilla *et al.*(1990) made use of the union as a channel of distribution for questionnaires, Bigoness (1978) and Scriesheim (1978) were personally involved with questionnaire distribution.

2.3.2 Research Methods Used in Previous Studies

Research methods applied in past studies can be generally categorized into three groups and discussed as follows (Friorito & Greer, 1982):

1. Time series approaches which usually employed econometrics where historical and structural data from secondary sources were used. For examples, the rate of inflation, wage variables and other business cycle variables. Some of the studies based on these approaches were used by Ashenfelter and Pencavel (1969) and Bain (1970).

2. Cross Sectional Analysis based on aggregate data was used by Hamner and Smith (1978) and Bain (1970).

3. Cross Sectional Analysis conducted at individual level, and where primary data was often collected using self-administered questionnaires and interviews.

Examples of studies which based on the approach are reported by Kochan (1979), Schreisheim (1979), Nicholson *et al.*(1981), Guest and Dewe (1986) and Kuruvilla *et al.* (1990).

While the first two approaches are useful in highlighting general trends and to explain effects of independent structural variables on membership they cannot easily explain discrepancies within a given category (Poole *et al*, 1983 and Guest & Dewe, 1988). Sociologists and social psychologists have found individual cross sectional analysis useful in the studies of behavioral participation in union membership (Gordon & Nurich, 1981 and Klandermans, 1986).

2.3.3 Theoretical Explanation of Trade Union Participation

Theoretical explanation on trade union participation in most of the past researches can be broadly categorized as follows from a psychological view point (Klandermans, 1986):

1. Frustration-aggression approach

Union participation is explained as a reactive behavior to frustration and dissatisfaction at work. Many studies have related dissatisfaction with union participation (Biogness, 1978, Schriesheim, 1978, Hamner & Smith, 1978, Kochan, 1979 and Nicholson *et al.* 1981).

2. Rational Choice Theory

Participation in union activities is viewed as an outcome of an individual's consideration of cost and benefit of joining trade union. This approach is widely used by economists especially in longitudinal studies where macrosociological factors were used to explain union growth or decline.

Participation in union activities because one believes that union is instrumental in getting better terms of employment (union instrumentality) is also explained by rational choice theory (See Bain ,1970, Anderson, 1979 and Fiorito & Greer, 1982).

3. Interactionist Theories

Union participation is related to social group both within and outside workplace. Individual decision to participate in union activities is influenced by the group which he or she identifies with. Some of the social groups are occupational group or work

groups (See Spinrad, 1960, Bain, 1970, Strauss, 1977, Glick *et al* 1977 and McShane, 1986).

Class consciousness workers were found to be associated with participation in many studies, Nicholson *et al.* (1981), and Guest and Dewe (1988) reported that parents' social class and occupation and political orientation were related to union participation.

2.4 DETERMINANTS OF UNION PARTICIPATION

Independent variables which were found to be related to union participation can be classified into demographic variables and attitudinal variables and are discussed as follows:

2.4.1 Demographic Variables

From the review of studies by Spinrad (1960), Bigoness (1978), Schriesheim (1978), Kochan (1979), Farber and Saks (1980), Gordon and Long (1981), Nicholson *et al.* (1981), Fiorito and Greer (1982), Bain and Elias (1985), McShane, (1986), Klandermans (1986), Snyder *et al.* (1986), Guest and Dewe (1988), Hundley (1988) and, Kuruvilla *et al.* (1990).

Variables that have positive relationship with union participation were:

Age, gender (male), marital status (married), number of dependent children, parents' occupation (manual), race (minority), job status(middle and upper), job tenure, organization tenure, number of union friends and political ideology (left wing).

However, there were contradicting results reported by different researchers for the following variables:

a.) Education level were found to be positively related with participation by McShane (1986) and Nicholson *et al.* (1981) but was found to be negatively related by Bain and Elias (1985), Kuruvilla *et al.*(1990), Deery and De Cieri (1990).

b.) Salary was found to be positively related by McShane (1986), Kuruvilla *et al.* (1990) but was negatively related by Bigoness (1986).

Listed below are findings of some key studies :

1. Farber and Saks (1980) found only age and race(minority) significant in determining union participation while seniority, promotion and gender were found to be insignificant.

2. Kochan (1979) found age, gender (male) education and race (minority) to be significant in influencing union participation.

3. Nicholson *et al.* (1981) found gender, job status, company tenure, education, parents' union orientation, strength of own union orientation, political interests, own political orientation to be significant in influencing union participation whereas marital status and number of dependent children were insignificant.

4. McShane (1986) found education and seniority influencing participation in union administration activities. Although these were not significantly related to non-administrative participation, only salary was found to have significant positive relationship with non-administrative union participation.

5. Guest and Dewe (1988) reported the type of work, age, education, and salary

had no significant influence on union participation. Only gender (male) had significant positive relationship with union participation.

6. Kuruvilla *et al.* (1990) found education, age, the number of young children, salary and company tenure significant and all were positively related to union participation except age and education which were negatively related to union participation.

2.4.2 Attitudinal Variables

1. Job Satisfaction

The attitudes towards different job aspects such as satisfaction with variety of work, with one's own boss, supervision, job security, creativity, company policy, pay, promotion working condition and need to achieve, were reported to have negative relation with union participation by most researchers. However, variations in findings do exist amongst different studies.

Listed below are findings of key studies on relation between union participation and job satisfaction:

1. Bigoness (1978) found that dissatisfaction with work itself, pay, promotion increased faculty attitude towards collective bargaining.

2. Hamner and Smith (1978) reported only satisfaction with working conditions was significant and negatively related to participation with union activities while supervision, the type of work, career advancement job security financial reward, identification with company were all insignificant in determining union participation.

3. Schriesheim (1978) reported both economic and non-economic satisfaction have significant negative relation with union participation.

4. Kochan (1979) reported that dissatisfaction with job content and economic factors were significant in determining union participation

5. Nicholson *et al.* (1981) reported significant positive relation between union participation and amount of responsibility and intrinsic interest in job. Pay, promotion opportunities and pride in organization was insignificant.

7. Guest and Dewe (1988) reported that dissatisfaction with job has no significant influence on union participation.

8. McShane (1986) reported extrinsic job satisfaction was significant and had a negative relation with non-administrative participation in union.

9. Kuruvilla *e. al.* (1990) found extrinsic job satisfaction to be significant and related negatively to union participation but intrinsic job satisfaction was insignificant.

2. Involvement in Decision

Perceived lack of involvement was found to be related to union participation as follows:

Bigoness (1978) reported insignificant relation between union participation and involvement in decision making. Kochan (1979), Nicholson *et al.* (1981) and Guest and Dewe (1985) found significant negative relation between involvement in decision making and union participation. While McShane (1986) found job involvement had a significant negative relation with administrative participation in union but insignificant positive relation with non-administrative union participation.

3. Perceived Union Effectiveness

Attitude towards union effectiveness was found to be related to union participation by Glick *et al.* (1977), Strauss (1977), Guest and Dewe (1988) and Kuruvilla *et al.* (1990).

4. Belief in Union Instrumentality

Believing that union is instrumental in improving terms of employment was related to union participation (See Kochan, 1979, Klandermans, 1986 and Kuruvilla *et al.*, 1990).

2.5 DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Union participation has often been studied as a dependent variable which is unidimensional, that is, treating participation in various union activities as one entity. Union participation was operationalized using individual voting behavior, membership growth, attending meetings and the propensity to join. However, recent researchers have provided evidence of the multidimensionality of union participation (Klandermans, 1986) and there is increasing support that union participation should be studied as multidimensional construct. For example, joining union, involving in union administration activities and taking part in non-administrative activities should each be studied as different dependent variables, in order to better understand the process of union participation (McShane, 1986). McShane (1986) identified three types of union involvement i.e. administrative participation, meeting attendance and voting participation. While Klandermans

(1986) suggested that research on individual decision to join union is relevant in a situation of voluntary membership and that union members can be distinguished between active non-administrative members(ordinary members), being union administrators (committee members) and paid officials (full-time union officials).

2.6 EVALUATION OF LITERATURE REVIEWED

The contradicting findings by different researchers made it difficult to base the theoretical framework on just one study. The variation in the findings could be due to different populations studied, different measuring instruments, how different variables were controlled and the use of different statistical techniques. Therefore, using findings from past research as guides a theoretical framework was developed to examine the independent variables identified since the study setting would be very different from those of the West.

2.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Based on the evidence gathered from the literature review and interviews with officials of MTUC, the Department of Trade Unions and the Malaysian Employers Federation, a general model of union participation was derived and is presented schematically in Figure 1.

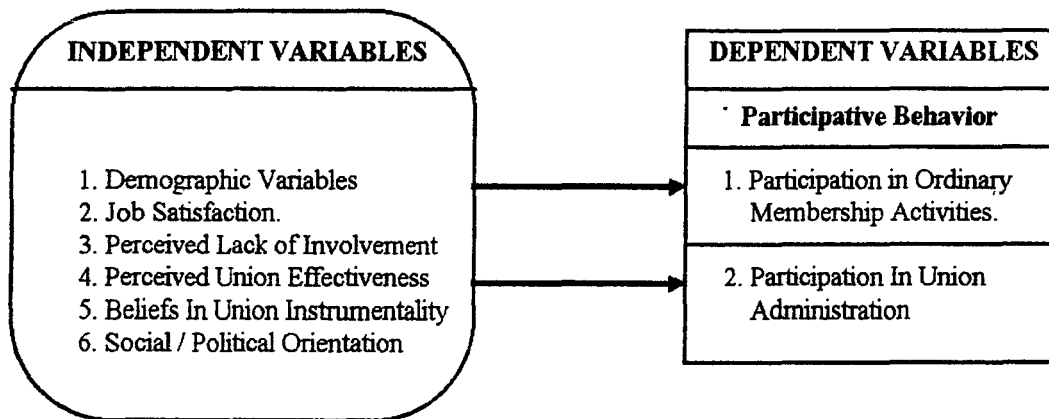


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework of Union Participation.

It was theorized that demographic variables, job satisfaction, perceived lack of involvement in decision making on the job, perceived union effectiveness, beliefs in union instrumentality and the individuals social and political orientation influence an individual's participation in both ordinary membership activities and in administrative activities.

The participative behavior examined were attendance of meetings and voting.

2.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH PROBLEM

Literature review indicated that little work has been done in Malaysia using the individual as unit of analysis. Given the scenario of union movement in Malaysia, it was the aim of the study to try to establish if factors such as:

1. Demographic variables,
2. Job satisfaction,
3. Perceived lack of involvement in decision making on the job,
4. Beliefs in union instrumentality,

5. Perceived union effectiveness and

6. Social/ political orientation such as, the number of union friends and own political orientation

which were found to be related to union involvement in Western studies, could also have bearing in the Malaysian context.

Union involvement was studied by treating joining union, participating in union administration, and involvement in non-administrative activities as separate entities.

Based on the findings of key researchers and the time frame given for the study, the most feasible approach for the proposed study was therefore a cross sectional study with union members as units of analysis. Data was collected via self-administered questionnaires in a particular industrial setting where the researcher might have greater access to the population being studied.

Measures were based on those which have been proven and are well established.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Past researchers on union participation have often focused on settings where compulsory membership were required due to closed shop agreement (Snyder *et al.*, 1986). Some of them failed to control for conflicting variables which might occur across different employment settings (Klandermans, 1986), for example, textile union members from different plants may have different wage structures, working conditions and management style may vary from plant to plant even though they may be under the same owners and governed by the same national union. Therefore, it was pertinent that respondents were from the same union and preferably were also be from the same plant.

3.1 SETTING AND POPULATION

It was decided that the population was to be from the manufacturing sector and in an industry where unionization was prevalent amongst employees.

3.1.1 Study Setting

The setting chosen was a Japanese textile factory which began operation in Penang in 1974. The workforce was close to 700 employees. Out of the total workforce, about 690 were entitled to join unions, while the rest were disqualified to join by the nature of their job responsibilities, these were managers, executives,

officers, confidential staff and security personnel. Participation in the union was voluntary, as there was no closed shop agreement.

The house-union was formed in 1977, under the Penang Union for Textile and Garment Workers, which is a member of the Malaysian Trade Union Congress. Unionization rate at this factory has been above 95% since 1992. The union-management relation has been described as good although they had a bad start when the union was first formed. Management is supportive of union activities by giving time off for union officials to do union related work, providing the union with an office and ancillary facilities such as office equipment.

3.1.2 Characteristics of the Population

There were approximately 650 union members and twenty of them were committee members. The number of female employees were higher than males but was not as significant as those in the electronic and electrical industry.

Production operators made up more than three quarters of the workforce, majority of them were educated up to lower secondary level, as their jobs did not require a high level of education. Many of them have long service record with the company. The education level was a cause for concern as the questionnaire may not be well responded as some items required respondents to ponder over .

3.2 QUESTIONS INVESTIGATED

The objective of the study was to seek answers to the following questions and to substantiate the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 2.