

# Measuring Employees Strike Propensity Among Labour Union Members: Development And Validation Of A Scale

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## Abstract

Our country encounters abundant economic loss due to strikes. An estimate by the Labour Bureau (2017) reveals that India has lost 11.73 lakh of working days to strikes, this has cost the country around Rs 550 crores. Strike propensity is a strong antecedent of strike (Barling et al. 1992). Strike propensity is a covert behavior that predicts strike action. Strike can create standstill circumstances and it is one of the most powerful tools used by labour unions for negotiation. Labour strike is the stoppage of work caused by the mass employees who refuse to work until their grievances are resolved. A strike's motive is to pressurize the authorities, management and government into bargaining for a change in their policies to meet the demands of the employees. A thorough understanding of the employee strike propensity would help the management to address their grievances and facilitate the smooth functioning of organizations. An understanding the strike propensity depends on the availability of an apt assessment tool. Reviews suggest a deficit in the appropriateness of available tools to assess the psychological aspects of strike propensity among the Indian labour union members which has prompted to develop a new tool. Hence, this research is to describe the process involved in developing a reliable and valid scale to assess Strike Propensity among Labour Union Members. The steps involved in the tool development are defining the construct, item generation, assessing content adequacy and establishing the reliability and validity of the scale.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The economic development is an essential criteria to label a country as a developed nation or a developing nation. Economic development is measured in terms of Gross Domestic Productivity

(GDP) which entirely depends on the industrial activities and the production of goods and services. The most important factor of an organization to be effective and profitable is to create an atmosphere of peace and harmony

among the employees and the management. A conflict between these two entities can result in disharmony and a cause to provoke employees to strike. When employees are dissatisfied with their incentives, working conditions and wages, they are legally allowed to strike. Strikes can create loss in production, poor sales and services and in some cases, loyal employees leave it also create loss to the organization.

A large number of trade unions are prevalent in India (Barber, 2003). Labour unions or trade unions are the organizations formed by labourers that work for the common interest of its members. The main issues that labour union raise their voices are for the employees' welfare, better working atmosphere, reasonable working hours for the employees, fairness in pay, and workers benefits. Some of the key principles and functions of labour unions are to regulate relations, work to settle grievances, raise new demands on behalf of workers and engage in collective bargaining and negotiations. Hence, unions represent a cluster of workers and act as a medium of communication between the management and workers. The Indian Trade Union Act, 1926, is the principle act which controls and regulates the mechanism of labour unions. In India, trade union movements are influenced by political lines and ideologies. So it is assumed that today's political parties form and manipulate trade unions to influence the labourers. Employers have the right to hire and fire the employees based on their will, but labour unions exert indirect control over the employer through their collective voices. It ensures security and equality among employees in a workplace.

### **Rationale for the Employee Strike Propensity Scale Exclusively for Labour Union Members**

Of all the states in India, in the year 2018, Kerala has witnessed a total no of 97 strikes (Kumar, 2019) bringing economic stagnation as well as a loss of crores of money. A cent percent successful strike can create a loss of around Rs 900 crore in the overall GDP of Kerala

Venugopal, (as cited in Rejimon, 2019). Therefore, of all the states in India, the apt state to study strike propensity is Kerala. According to Metcalf (2019), a strike is one of the most powerful tools that labour unions use to address employment or labour issue. It is always effective to raise employees' grievances collectively rather than individually as it is hard for the management to overlook the collective voice. When unions voice their members' job quality concerns either through informal communication channels or collective bargaining processes, it captures the attention of the management regarding the employees' job quality problems and subsequently responses by making necessary changes within the workplace and seek to address these problems (Wood, 2008). When negotiations fails, they embark on strike for their rights. Nation's economic and political scenario can be altered by well-organized trade unionism (Aziz, 2015). Strikes have been considered as an instrument by union leaders to alert the management about their grievances and working conditions (Adavbiele, 2015). Therefore, it is essential to study the strike propensity in the current scenario. Since, there are no relevant tools to assess the employee strike propensity in the Indian context. "Employee Strike Propensity scale" has been developed by the researcher for the Indian context in general and the state of Kerala in particular.

## **II. METHOD**

### **Definition of the construct**

**Strike propensity** is a covert behavior wherein the employees exhibit willingness or readiness to engage in strike due to lack of or perceived lack of redressal of their grievances which create a standstill circumstance (Amal & Jayakumar, 2019).

### **The procedure of questionnaire development**

#### **Item Generation**

The primary objective of the current study was to develop a tool to assess employee strike

propensity among labour union members for which the inductive approach was used. First, strike propensity among labour union members in the organizations was studied thoroughly through in-depth and extensive review of literature. Second, Focused group discussion with the labour union members and the labour union leaders of various public and private sector industries were carried out to identify the hardships employees undergo and the factors that can trigger a strike. Six dimensions were derived after completing the review of literature and focused group discussion. i.e., work dissatisfaction, militancy, political socialization, union commitment, organization commitment and work commitment. 97 items were generated spreading across these six dimensions of employee strike propensity and proofreading was done to eliminate grammatical errors.

### **Content Validity**

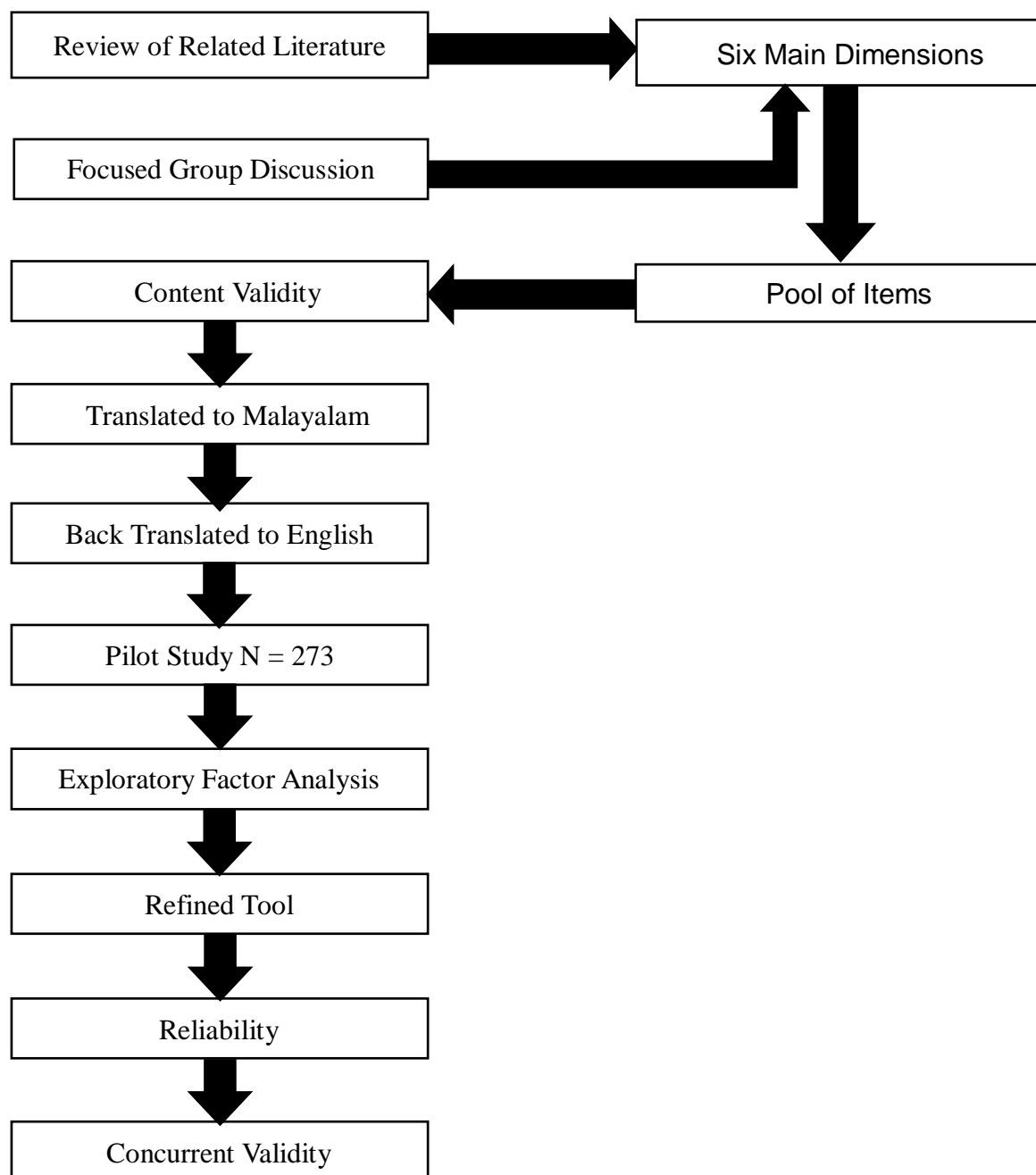
Content validity focuses on the representativeness of the content (Kerlinger, 1986). To establish content validity, the generated items were distributed among 23 experts. The experts were inclusive of five labour union members, seven labour union leaders from various public and private sector industries, five HR managers and six professors from Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), National Institute of Technology (NIT) and Indian Institute of Management (IIM). They were asked to rate the

items based on the degree of which the items are related to employee strike propensity concept either by accepting, rejecting or modifying the items. Out of 97 items, 38 items were removed and 59 items were retained in the scale after the experts' evaluation.

As the proposed sample of study is more conversant in Malayalam, it was decided to retain both English and its equivalent Malayalam translated version below each item. The English version of the proposed tool was translated to Malayalam for better comprehension of the sample. The translation was done in a manner that conceptual equivalence of words and phrases was maintained. Back translation was done by language experts who had no knowledge regarding the tool. This translation was done to verify whether the translated tool captures the exact meaning of the original tool.

### **Rating Scale Format**

Babakus and Mangold (1992) suggested that with a 5 - point Likert-type scale, the response rate and response quality increased and at the same time it reduced the "frustration level" of the respondents. Considering this aspect a five-point Likert scale response which ranges from Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Undecided (3), Agree (4) and Strongly Agree (5) was used. Finally, the 59 items employee strike propensity scale was ready for the pilot study.

**Diagrammatic Representation of the Process of Development of Employee Strike Propensity Scale****Figure-1****Pilot Study**

The employee strike propensity scale was tested after the content validity. The data was collected through a direct survey from labour union members of various organizations who are working in and around Ernakulum district, in the state of Kerala, India. A total of 307 labour union members participated in the survey. The respondents were selected from different

organizations to avoid similarities in their responses. Out of 307 data, 34 data were eliminated due to incomplete responses. Finally, 273 participant's data were retained for further analyses. IBM SPSS 21.0 version was used to perform the statistical analyses for the collected data. The sample consisted of 273 participants out of which 250 were males and 23 were females with an average age of 39.8 years (SD=11.13).

## Pilot- study respondent characteristics

**Table 1 the socio-demographic characteristics of the labour union members who responded to the survey**

Characteristics	Frequency	%
<b>Age group (years)</b>		
20-30	83	30.4%
31-40	73	26.7%
>41-50	56	20.5%
>50	61	22.3%
<b>Gender</b>		
Males	250	91.6%
Females	23	8.4%
<b>Order of Birth</b>		
First Born	88	32.2%
Second Born	76	27.8%
Third Born	53	19.4%
Single Born	24	8.8%
Others	32	11.7%
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	76	27.8%
Married	197	72.2%
<b>Family Type</b>		
Nuclear	219	80.2%
Joint	54	19.8%
<b>Area of Residence</b>		
Rural	173	63.4%
Semi-Urban	47	17.2%
Urban	53	19.4%
<b>Educational Qualification</b>		
Up to 10 <sup>th</sup>	68	24.9%
10 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup>	35	12.8%
Diploma	134	49.1%
Degree and Above	36	13.2%
<b>Socio-economic Status</b>		

Lower Class	57	20.9%
Middle Class	209	76.6%
Upper Class	7	2.6%
<b>Place of Work</b>		
Rural	110	40.3%
Semi-Urban	139	50.9%
Urban	24	8.8%
<b>Labour Union</b>		
INTUC	93	34.1
CITU	143	52.4
BMS	13	4.8
AITUC	12	4.4
KTUC	4	1.5
STU	8	2.9

## Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was used to find the number of factors influencing the variables and to analyze which variables club together (DeCoster, 1998). After establishing the content validity, 59 items were retained and then with the 59 items spread across 6 dimensions were factor analyzed using the principal component analysis EFA with varimax rotation. Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin (KMO) test was performed to assess whether the samples are adequate to conduct further analysis and obtained a score of 0.73. Netemeyer, Bearden and Sharma (2003) suggested that a KMO value above 0.60 to 0.70 is adequate for the factor analysis. Barlett's test of sphericity was used to assess the appropriateness of the correlation matrix and the test was carried out and the obtained score was 5305.67 ( $p < 0.01$ ). The significant p-value of less than 0.05 shows that the dataset does not create an identity matrix. The items with a factor loading of at least 0.4 and above were retained based on the recommendation of Tabachnick and Fidell (2014) who suggested to ignore the items whose factor loadings were less than 0.32. For each of the 6 dimensions, the top 4 items with the highest factor loadings were retained. Harvey, Billings, and Nilan (1985) recommended that a minimum of four items on a scale is required to test the homogeneity of items



within each latent construct. Finally, a total of 24 items in the employee strike propensity scale was

almost ready for further standardization procedures.

**Table 2 Factor Analysis of the 59 Items of the proposed Employee Strike Propensity Scale**

Items	Work Dissatisfaction	Militancy	Political Socialization	Union Commitment	Organization Commitment	Work Commitment
Usually union employees strike when the management gives unjustifiable workload. (മാനേജ്മെന്റ് നൽകുന്ന ന്യായീകരിക്കാനാവാത്ത ജോലിഭാരത്തിനെതിരെ സാധാരണയായി സമരം ചെയ്യാറുണ്ട്.)	0.62					
Union employees believe that open fight against management is the only way to satisfy their demands. (മാനേജ്മെന്റിനെതിരെയുള്ള തുറന്ന പോരാട്ടം തൊഴിലാളികളുടെ ആവശ്യങ്ങൾ തൃപ്തിപ്പെടുത്തുന്നതിനുള്ള ഒരേയൊരു മാർഗ്ഗമാണ് എന്ന് തൊഴിലാളികൾ വിശ്വസിക്കുന്നു.)	0.54					
Usually union employees extend support to co-unions' strike/protest against management. (മാനേജ്മെന്റിനെതിരെയുള്ള യൂണിയനുകളുടെ സംഘടനകളുടെ പ്രതിഷേധ സമരങ്ങൾ സാധാരണയായി തൊഴിലാളികൾ പിന്തുണയ്ക്കുന്നു.)	0.50					
I believe that employees have to undergo lots of hardships at the time of strike. (സമരം നടക്കുന്ന സമയത്ത് തൊഴിലാളികൾ കഠിനമായ സാഹചര്യങ്ങളിലൂടെ കടന്നുപോകേണ്ടതുവെന്ന് വിശ്വസിക്കുന്നു.)	0.49					
Union members are aware of colleagues who support and oppose the strike. (സമരത്തെ പിന്തുണയ്ക്കുന്നവരും പിന്തുണക്കാത്തവരുമായി ഉള്ള ബന്ധം അറിഞ്ഞ് തൊഴിലാളി സംഘടനാംഗങ്ങൾ അറിയുന്നു.)		0.63				
Usually union employees go on strike when the management reduces their benefits. (മാനേജ്മെന്റ് തൊഴിലാളികളുടെ ആവശ്യങ്ങളെ പൂർണ്ണമായും തൃപ്തിപ്പെടുത്താൻ സാധാരണയായി തൊഴിലാളി സംഘടന പ്രവർത്തനം സമരം ചെയ്യാറുണ്ട്.)		0.60				
Union employees raise their voice against new company policies which are not beneficial for the employees. (തൊഴിലാളികൾക്ക് ഗുണകരമല്ലാത്ത കമ്പനിയുടെ പുതിയ നയങ്ങൾക്കെതിരെ തൊഴിലാളി സംഘടന പ്രവർത്തനം ശബ്ദമുയർത്താറുണ്ട്.)		0.52				
Union employees strike when the management is not giving appropriate wage/salary for their work. (മാനേജ്മെന്റ് തൊഴിലാളികളുടെ ജോലിക്ക് അനുയോജ്യമായ വേതനം നൽകാൻ കൂന്നില്ലെങ്കിൽ തൊഴിലാളി സംഘടന സമരം നടത്താറുണ്ട്.)		0.51				
I maintain friendly relationship with my union members than my co-workers. (എന്റെ സഹപ്രവർത്തകരെക്കാൾ എന്റെ സംഘടനയിലെ അംഗങ്ങൾക്കാണ് ഞാൻ ഹൃദയം കാത്തുസംരക്ഷിക്കുന്നത്.)			0.52			
I do not have any plans to leave the organization. (ഈ സ്ഥാപനത്തിനിന്നും ജോലി ഉപേക്ഷിച്ച് പോകുന്നതിന് എനിക്ക് ഒരു പദ്ധതിയുമില്ല.)			0.50			
Union employees have the conviction that labour union is the medium that unites employees. (തൊഴിലാളി സംഘടന തൊഴിലാളികളെ ഏകോപിപ്പിക്കുന്ന മാധ്യമമാണ് എന്ന ദൃഢവിശ്വാസം തൊഴിലാളികൾക്കുണ്ട്.)			0.49			
Union employees believe that their union function in a friendly manner with the management. (മാനേജ്മെന്റുമായി സൗഹൃദമായിട്ടാണ് തങ്ങളുടെ സംഘടനയുടെ പ്രവർത്തനം നടത്തുന്നതെന്ന് തൊഴിലാളികൾ വിശ്വസിക്കുന്നു.)			0.49			
Employees do not like trade-union activities in their workplace. (ജോലിസ്ഥലത്തെ തൊഴിലാളി സംഘടനാ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ തൊഴിലാളികൾ ഇഷ്ടപ്പെടുന്നില്ല.)				0.58		
I cannot relate to my job. (എന്റെ ജോലിയുമായി ഒരു ബന്ധം സ്ഥാപിക്കാൻ കഴിയില്ല.)				0.58		
Employees believe that trade unions do not work for the employee empowerment. (തൊഴിലാളികളുടെ ശാക്തീകരണത്തിനുവേണ്ടി തൊഴിലാളി യൂണിയനുകൾ പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നില്ല എന്ന് തൊഴിലാളികൾ വിശ്വസിക്കുന്നു.)				0.49		

I never go for strike because strike is not a solution for the problem. (സമരത്തിന് പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾക്കുള്ള പരിഹാരമല്ല എന്നതിന് സമരങ്ങളിൽ ഞങ്ങൾ പങ്കെടുക്കാറില്ല ).				0.48	
I believe that my organization has an employee friendly management. (തൊഴിലാളി സൗഹൃദമായ മാനേജ്മെന്റാണ് എൻറെ സ്ഥാപനത്തിനുള്ളത് എന്ന് ഞങ്ങൾ信じてയുണ്ട്).				0.65	
My superiors recognize and appreciate my accomplishments. (എൻറെ മേലുദ്യോഗസ്ഥൻ ഞങ്ങളുടെ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ അംഗീകരിക്കുകയും ചെല്ലാറുണ്ട്).				0.58	
I am ready to conform to the new rules and policies of the organization. (സ്ഥാപനത്തിൻറെ പുതിയ നയങ്ങളോടും നിയമങ്ങളോടും അനുസരിച്ചാണ് ഞങ്ങൾ തയ്യാറാണ് ).				0.55	
I am satisfied with my current wage/salary. (എനിക്ക് ലഭിക്കുന്ന വേതനത്തിന് ശമ്പളത്തിൽ ഞങ്ങൾ സംതൃപ്തനാണ്).				0.54	
I complete my work before the deadline. (എനിക്ക് അനുവദിച്ചിട്ടുള്ള സമയപരിധിക്ക് മുമ്പ് എൻറെ ജോലി പൂർത്തിയാക്കാറുണ്ട് ).				0.52	
I believe that my organization provides career advancement opportunities. (എൻറെ സ്ഥാപനം കരിയർ മുന്നേറ്റത്തിനുള്ള അവസരങ്ങൾ നൽകുന്നുണ്ടെന്ന് ഞങ്ങൾ വിശ്വസിക്കുന്നു).				0.48	
My organization gives me status in the society. (എൻറെ സ്ഥാപനം എനിക്ക് മൂല്യം നൽകുന്നുണ്ട് ).				0.43	
Most of my interactions at workplace are positive. (ജോലിസ്ഥലത്തെ എൻറെ ഇടപെടലുകൾ പോസിറ്റീവ് ആണ്).				0.42	

## Inter-Item correlation

Inter-Item correlation helps to comprehend whether the items on a scale assess the same content (Cohen & Swerdlik, 2005). The average inter-item correlation was performed with each of the six factors/dimensions. The average inter-item correlation for Work Dissatisfaction, Militancy, Political Socialization, Union Commitment, Organization Commitment and Work Commitment are 0.27, 0.31, 0.20, 0.20, 0.26 and 0.27 respectively. All the values were significant ( $p < 0.05$ ).

## Reliability Analysis

Reliability can be defined as the degree to which a measurement of a phenomenon provides stable and consistent results (Carmines & Zeller, 1979). Cronbach's alpha has been taken as a measure of reliability and the scale with a Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.50 to 0.75 suggests that the scale has moderate reliability (Hinton, Brownlow, McMurphy & Cozens, 2004). The Cronbach's alpha for the dimensions of employee strike propensity scale viz. Work Dissatisfaction, Militancy, Political Socialization, Union Commitment, Organization

Commitment, Work Commitment are 0.61, 0.65, 0.51, 0.52, 0.60 and 0.75 respectively. The Cronbach's alpha was calculated for the 24 item employee strike propensity scale which was found to be 0.74 ( $p < 0.05$ ) indicating a good internal consistency. The scale was split into two equal halves to establish Split-Half Reliability for the scale. The correlation coefficient attained with Spearman-Brown Prophecy Formula is 0.79 which is quite adequate.

## Concurrent Validity

In order to further strengthen the scale, the new scale was administered along with an already existing standard scale of a related concept on a sample of 273 participants. Political Participation is an individual's interest in political life. Political interest has a strong relationship with political protest behaviour (Potgieter, 2013). Participatory Behaviour Scale (PBS) which is used in the present study was developed by Talò & Mannarini (2015). All the items were measured using a 5-point Likert type scale (1= Not at all, 2= Not much, 3= Quite, 4= Strongly, 5= Totally). An example item is: "Participates in strikes, protests, demonstrations". The Cronbach's alpha of PBS tool was found to be 0.81. The newly developed

scale of Employee Strike Propensity showed a significant relationship with Participatory

Behaviour Scale. A moderate correlation of 0.55 was obtained.

Variables	Employee Strike Propensity	Participatory Behaviour	Mean	SD	
Employee Strike Propensity	—	0.55*	85.08	9.58	
Participatory Behaviour	0.55*	—	46.53	15.89	

**Table 3 Correlation between Participatory Behaviour and Employee Strike Propensity**

\*significant at 0.05 level

### III. DISCUSSION

The primary objective of the research is to develop and standardize employee strike propensity scale as there are no standardized tools to assess the employee strike propensity in the Indian context. The researcher has developed “Employee Strike Propensity scale” for the labour union members in the Indian context in general and Kerala state in particular. The scale consists of 24 items which spread across the six dimensions of employee strike propensity scale. They are Work Dissatisfaction, Militancy, Political Socialization, Union Commitment, Organization Commitment and Work Commitment. A five point Likert scale is used in this scale which ranges from Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Undecided (3), Agree (4) and Strongly Agree (5) was used. Higher the score shows higher the Employee Strike Propensity.

*Work Dissatisfaction* is considered as the unhappy feelings or negative attitude of an employee towards the work or the working conditions. It suggests that the employees’ union participation is a reaction to alienation, frustration, or dissatisfaction with the work environment (Cohen, 1992). *Militancy* comprises of past militant behavior as well as militant attitudes. This is a part of the strike propensity as those who are involved in militant behavior or possess militant attitudes tend to engage in strike (Martin, 1986). *Political Socialization* includes support from significant others and attitude towards

unions. Participation in the union is supported by employees who are conducive to union activities than employees who are exposed to non-supportive socialization experiences (Martin, 1986; Schutt, 1982). *Union Commitment* explains whether the union members and the union are psychologically related. Committed union members express loyalty and actively participate in union activities. They are less willing to leave the union and shows more willingness to engage in a strike. Union members internalize the goals and beliefs of their union (Martin & Sinclair, 2001; Fullagar & Barling, 1989). *Organization Commitment* is the extent to which employee and the organization are psychologically related. Belongingness to the organization and feeling of attachment is experienced by the employees with high organizational commitment (Martin & Sinclair, 2001). *Work Commitment* focuses on the psychological relationship of an employee with his/her work. It is the extent to which an employee experience a sense of responsibility towards the organization’s goals and mission. An employee with high work commitment strives to achieve the organization’s goal by performing assigned tasks, duties and responsibilities with utmost sincerity (Cohen, 1992).

Cronbach’s alpha reliability of the Employee Strike Propensity Scale is 0.74, Split-Half Reliability corrected with Spearman-Brown Prophecy Formula is 0.79 and the concurrent validity of the Employee Strike Propensity scale



with Participatory Behaviour scale is 0.55. The newly developed scale has satisfactory reliability and validity.

### Implication

The newly developed Employee Strike Propensity Scale is a useful measure for HR managers and the management to address their employees' perception towards strikes before it arises. It would be useful to help HR managers and the management to rectify their employees' grievances and take necessary actions before an issue arises. The tool can be used during recruitment to identify the employees with strike prone tendency. The tool can identify employees who are dissatisfied with their workplace and guide HR Managers to provide individual attention to the affected employees.

### IV. CONCLUSION

The employee strike propensity scale is to assess the labour union members' readiness to engage in strike and the factors that can trigger a strike was studied. Every successful organization strengthens the economic backbone of the country. Given the fact that the financial contribution of each organization boosts a country's GDP, it is essential to maintain a harmonious work environment and develop a cordial organizational climate. Strikes and unrests ravage an organizations' smooth functioning resulting in economic and financial loss. Therefore, interference by the management at the right time is required to avert such a situation.

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