

The participation in unions. this article draws its



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The role that women play in current issues has been put on the spotlight in the recent past.

These include the role that women play in unions all over the world. In United Kingdom, women role in unions has been a subject of intense debate and has been documented in articles such as Gill Kirton's "The Influences on Women Joining and Participating in Unions." These articles puts spotlight on gender theory on matters of union participation especially by women. Kirton draws her conclusion from qualitative data derived from conclusive studies done on the level of participation of women in two of the largest UK trade unions. The article centres on four major concerns touching on women's roles in union: family, union, work and feminism. Traditionally, family, union and profession played an important role on defining women's role in unions but in the recent past, feminism has also emerged as a major influence on women joining and participation in unions.

This article draws its conclusions from a survey conducted over three years ending in 2002 in two of UK's largest Unions as well as critical reviews on the subjects of women participation in unions and concludes that the increase in the number of women participation in trade union is the result of industrial reorganization in UK. In this article Kirton (2005) focuses more on the factors that influence on women enrolment and joining of trade unions. The article highlights four major factors such as family background, the role of union experiences, feminism and professional experiences. Kirton (2005) asserts that not a single of these influences played a dominant role. These factors combine to influence women to join unions in the UK.

The article rightly reports that even though education formed a big part in educating the UK working class about unionisation, family background played a significant role in women enrolment into unions. Women from families with union affiliation considered joining trade union as a natural occurrence. Kirton (2005) adds that negative perceptions from anti-unionist family background did little to prevent women members from such families joining union. Even though working in ununionisable contexts as well as family backgrounds encouraged women to join, residues of the traditional patriarchal influences still affect the joining and participation of women in union affairs. There is very little access by women to gender sensitive discourse in union affairs. The article strongly highlights the fact that women are discriminated in union based activities especially leadership.

Furthermore, the initial resistance of women to identify themselves as feminist slowed the rate that the women joined unions. Kirton (2005) note though that feminist has had an effective role in not only increasing women participation in unions abut also feminizing them. Even though the article suggest affirmative action as the only way to increase women participation in trade unions, it does little to suggesting how and in what ways affirmative action should help increase not only participation but also increase the numbers of women joining. With time the propensity and opportunity to join unions has taken a gender perspective. This has been more evident in work related environment rather than in family backgrounds. Even though the experiences of fellow women at the work place has had a positive influence on women roles in unions it is the feminization of these unions that has

played a significant role in encouraging women to play more active union roles.

Reference List

Kirton, G. (2005). The influences on women joining and participation in unions. *Industrial Relations Journal*, 34(5), 386 – 401.