

# Demographic Variables Associated with Women's Participation in Trade Unionism in Southwest, Nigeria

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## Abstract

The study examined demographic variables associated with women's participation in trade unionism in Southwest, Nigeria. The descriptive research design of the survey type was used in this study. The population consisted of all women who are civil and public servants in Southwest, Nigeria while 2,352 civil and public servants who were women selected from 30 Ministries (MDAs) and 3 public tertiary institutions made up the sample of the study. The samples were selected using a multistage sampling procedure. A questionnaire designed by the researcher tagged "Demographic Factors and Women Participation in Trade Unionism Questionnaire (DFWPTUQ)" was used to collect relevant data for the study. The data collected with the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The three hypotheses were tested using inferential statistics involving Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and t-test. The study revealed that women's participation in trade unionism was not determined by their religion or age, but marital status as single women participated in trade unionism than married women. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that religious leaders should encourage women to participate in trade union activities because they have some important role to play in nation-building.

**Keywords:** Religion, Marital Status, Age, Women, Participation, Trade Unionism,

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## Introduction

It is observed that Nigeria is a strong patriarchal society where the female members who are subjugated are seen to be inferior to the male members of the society and treated as subordinates to their male counterparts (Abu, 2017). In Nigeria, females are regarded as inferior to men, hence, they are denied access to both honoured and utilitarian roles open only to males (Andibo, 2018). The assumption that democracy would spontaneously boost women's participation in trade unionism has not been validated after twenty-one years of Nigeria's return to civilian rule. While Nigeria has not been able to produce a female elected president to head Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Trade Union Congress (TUC), Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) or Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE), since 1999, only few women have been elected as members of executives of the named trade Unions (Andibo, 2018).

The major goal of the Nigerian Trade Union movement is to represent the specific interest of workers (Fashoyin, 2018). The primary purpose of the trade union movement is to struggle for the rights and ensure the welfare of workers, specifically, for improved conditions of service (Fashoyin, 2018). Whenever negotiations fail to achieve the desired result, trade unions are noted for directing workers to either stay at home or street protests which are capable of grounding the production process and the economy (Fashoyin, 2018). Kaminski & Pauly (2018) suggested that women are less competitive and hierarchical than men. This might be the reason why there is low participation of women in trade unionism. This motivated the researcher to examine the extent of women's participation in trade unionism based on three demographic factors such as religion, marital status, and age.

The purpose of the study was to examine demographic variables associated with women's participation in trade unionism in Southwest, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined

1. the attitude of women towards trade unionism; and
2. the difference in women's participation in trade unionism based on their religion, marital status and age.

## Research Question

The following research question was raised:

1. What is the attitude of women towards trade unionism?

## Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in women's participation in trade unionism based on their religion
2. There is no significant difference in women's participation in trade unionism based on their marital status
3. There is no significant difference in women's participation in trade unionism based on their age

## Literature Review

The term "trade union" has a variety of meanings, depending on the perception of workers and the definition imposed by legal frameworks in many countries. According to Ugbogu (2016), trade unions are pressure groups created mainly for economic interest of their members. The trade union is an association of workers formed for the purpose of protection and improving the socio – economic status of its members through collective action.

Okafor and Bode-Okunade (2018) however submitted that trade unions have five objectives, namely: (1) To work towards securing a maximum degree of job security

pursuance to workers' enjoyment of terms and conditions of service; (2) To work towards ensuring improved terms and conditions of employment for its members; (3) To work towards improving the bargaining power of its members through collective support vis-à-vis the employers; (4) Seek to improve the level and status of its members as they remain in the organisation; and (5) Seek to increase democratic practice in issues and decisions affecting its members in their organisations.

On the front of trade union leadership, women are hardly visible. While unions have taken proactive steps to promote diversity in leadership, there is still a gap (Kaminsky & Pauly, 2018). According to Beijing platform for action, women have demonstrated considerable leadership in community and informal organisations as well as public offices, but socialization and stereotyping reinforce the tendency for most decision-making organs to remain in the hands of men. In trade unionism, women are clustered in the lower cadre of the profession, due to the masculine procedures. Women face stiffer challenges as opposed to their male counterparts and as such lack confidence to participate in union leadership positions (Andibo, 2018).

Religion could determine women's participation in trade unionism. Religion may influence society in two ways. First, activities, such as church attendance, are social activities that could be an instrument for establishing networks for economic activities. Also, the influence of religion on modifying people's behaviour cannot be overestimated. The influence of religion on women workers' participation in trade unionism could be positive or negative, depending on several other factors. Some religions do not support women heading a particular position in the society. Such religion may hinder the active participation of women in trade unionism. In some other cultural environments, women cannot fight for their rights because they are seen as second-rate citizens while the opposite is the case in some cultural settings (Osiruemu, 2017). Some religious doctrines militate against the active participation of women in politics and position of authority. It appears that the doctrines of Islam discouraged women from some political endeavours such as public speaking that could facilitate their trade unionism ambitions.

The marital status of a woman also appears to determine her participation in trade unionism. It appears that the childbirth process had been a major barrier to women's participation in trade unionism as they might not be able to render full and active services to their Unions. Andibo (2018) stated that married women unionists run into the difficulty of serving two masters at the same time. The researcher observed that participation in trade unionism involves a lot of meetings and only a few husbands especially in Nigeria, and Yoruba race in particular, would be lenient to allow their wives to be globe-trotters all in the name of trade unionism.

Age is another important socio-cultural factor that is expected to have a great influence on women's active participation in trade unionism. The influence of the age factor could be positive or negative. For instance, older women and nursing mothers are seen as workers who are not as active as younger ones and as such may be seen as having a low probability of participation in trade unionism. On the other hand, older women in any organisation are those that are likely to have spent more years in such organisations than the younger ones. Hence, older women may be more active in trade unionism than the younger ones due to the number of years they have spent in such organisations. Several studies have shown that older people are risk averse as they are less likely to take risks than younger people, they are also found to be less receptive to technology adoption (Yusuf, 2013).

## Methodology

The descriptive research design of the survey type was used in this study without any manipulation. The population consisted of all women who are civil and public servants in Southwest, Nigeria. The sample size for this study consisted of 2,352 women civil and public servants which were selected from 30 Ministries (MDAs) and 3 public tertiary institutions. The samples were selected using a multistage sampling procedure. A questionnaire designed by the researcher tagged "Demographic Factors and Women Participation in Trade Unionism Questionnaire (DFWPTUQ)" was used to collect relevant data for the study. It consisted of two sections, namely: Section A and Section B. Section A sought for bio-data of the respondents which included religion, marital status, and age. Section B consisted of 15 items to elicit information on attitude towards trade unionism and women's participation in trade unionism. The instrument is a 4-point scale of Likert type: Strongly Agree (SA) - 4, Agree (A) - 3, Disagree (D) - 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) - 1.

The validity of the instrument was ensured through face and content validity by experts of Tests and Measurement. The reliability of the instrument was determined through the test re-test method. The data collected on the two tests were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.87. The data collected with the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The research question was answered using frequency count, mean and standard deviation. The three hypotheses were tested using inferential statistics involving t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance.

## Results

**Research Question 1:** What is the attitude of women towards trade unionism?

**Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Attitude of Women Towards Trade Unionism**

S/N	ITEMS	N	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	I show interest in participating in trade unionism	2352	2.37	0.76	Negative Attitude
2.	I am interested in trade unionism	2352	2.63	0.51	Positive Attitude
3.	I do not like to show my face in trade union meetings	2352	2.94	0.26	Positive Attitude
4.	I am happy to take part in decision making in trade unionism	2352	3.01	0.14	Positive Attitude
5.	I do not see trade union agitation as waste of time	2352	2.60	0.55	Positive Attitude
6.	I do not see trade unionism as a fruitless effort to agitate for members' right and privileges.	2352	2.98	0.28	Positive Attitude
7.	I see decision making concerning public affairs as the duty of both gender and not men only	2352	2.63	0.51	Positive Attitude

8.	I see trade union participation for women as unnecessary	2352	2.91	0.34	Positive Attitude
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Mean cut off: 2.50

Table 1 revealed the attitude of women towards trade unionism. The table revealed that the respondents have a negative attitude towards trade unionism, but they have a general interest in trade unionism. The respondents have a positive attitude to all the items raised except that they do not show interest in participating in trade unionism. Based on the remark, women have a positive attitude towards participation in trade unionism in Southwest, Nigeria.

### Testing of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference in women's participation in trade unionism based on their religion

**Table 2:** Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for difference in women's participation in trade unionism based on their religion

Groups	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.207	2	.603	0.054	.948
Within Groups	26377.456	2349	11.229		
<b>Total</b>	<b>26378.663</b>	<b>2351</b>			

$P > 0.05$

The result presented in Table 2 showed that F-cal value of 0.054 is not significant because the P-value (0.948)  $> 0.05$  at 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference in women's participation in trade unionism based on their religion.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in women's participation in trade unionism based on their marital status

**Table 3:** t-test analysis for the difference in women's participation in trade unionism based on their marital status

Variations	N	Mean	SD	Df	t <sub>cal</sub>	P
Single/Widow	900	41.36	3.30	2350	2.191*	0.029
Married	1452	41.05	3.37			

\* $P < 0.05$

Table 3 shows that the t-cal value of 2.191 is significant because the P-value (0.029)  $< 0.05$ . This implies that the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in women's participation in trade unionism based on their marital status. The mean score showed a significant difference in favour of women who are single or widow.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant difference in women's participation in trade unionism based on their age



**Table 4:** Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for the difference in women's participation in trade unionism based on their age

Groups	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	10.242	3	3.414	0.304	.823
Within Groups	26368.421	2348	11.230		
<b>Total</b>	<b>26378.663</b>	<b>2351</b>			

$P > 0.05$

The result presented in Table 4 showed that the F-cal value of 0.304 is not significant because the P-value (0.823)  $> 0.05$  at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference in women's participation in trade unionism based on their age.

### Discussion

The study showed that women have positive attitudes towards participation in trade unionism in Southwest, Nigeria. The probable reason for this finding might be because it is through trade unions that their agitations could be put forward. The finding contradicted the finding of Andibo (2018) who found that women have negative attitudes towards unionism. He concluded that the positive attitude of the few vocal ones among them could be interpreted as the ranting of an ant and that they are only interested in tilting the order of nature.

This study further revealed that there is no significant difference in women's participation in trade unionism based on their religion. The probable reason for this finding might be due to some religious beliefs that stop women from working thereby limiting them from joining and participating in trade unionism. The finding of this study on religion is in line with Anifowose (2004) and Osiruemu (2017) who observed that women's participation in trade unionism across all religions is the same.

The study, however, revealed that there was a significant difference in women's participation in trade unionism based on their marital status in favour of single/widow. The probable reason might be because women who are single or widow are not under the authority of any man. Men seem to maintain power and control of resources in the home as they always dominate and determine their wives' participation in trade unionism. This finding support Dung (2007) who reported that marital status influences women's participation in trade unionism. The findings are also in line with Ugbo (2016) who concluded that as the household size increases, the females tend to be more pre-occupied with household activities required by other members of the household.

Again, the findings of this study revealed that there was no significant difference in women's participation in trade unionism based on their age. The finding, however, contradicted the finding of Osiruemu (2017) who concluded that age is related and has an effect on women's participation in trade unionism.

### Summary of Findings

The summary of findings is as follows:

1. Women had positive attitude towards participation in trade unionism in Southwest, Nigeria
2. There was no significant difference in women's participation in trade unionism based on their religion

3. There was significant difference in women's participation in trade unionism based on their marital status
4. There was no significant difference in women's participation in trade unionism based on their age

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that women's participation in trade unionism is not determined by their religion or age but marital status as single women participated in trade unionism than married women.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

- Religious leaders should encourage women to participate in trade union activities because they have some important role to play in nation-building.
- Women of all age groups should be encouraged and motivated to participate in trade union activities.
- Important union meetings should be done in the day time instead of at night which is usually the case. This would allow women who are married to participate in trade unionism because some would not like to attend night meetings since their husbands may not allow them.

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