

## ABSTRACT

In an era of economic liberalization, globalization and privatization the effectiveness of the trade unions all over the world have been adversely affected by declining union power, indifferent union leadership, changing union management relationship, increase in managerial responsiveness to workers' needs, decline in collective bargaining power, increase in workers' participation in management and pursuance of human resource policies by the employers. This study has been conducted to examine the impact of all the above factors on the effectiveness of the trade unions in the Indian Railways, the largest employer of the country with a strong history of unionism. Data has been collected through Interview Schedule from 300 respondents of Kharagpur Division and Kharagpur Workshop of South Eastern Railway and include workers, trade union leaders and managers. The study is based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative research. The results suggest that the effectiveness of the unions in the Indian Railways is waning primarily due to reduction in union power, ineffective union leadership and decline of collective bargaining power. The workers perceive management to be more responsive to their needs than the unions. The increase in human resource practices and workers' participation in management have also contributed to fall in union effectiveness. The union management relation is gradually tilting in favour of the latter. The study has implications for both unions as well as management to maintain a democratic and balanced industrial relation system in the railways.

**Key Words:** Union Effectiveness, Union Power, Union Management Relationship, Union leadership, Collective Bargaining, Workers' Participation in Management and Human Resource Practices.