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## **WORKERS' ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS TOWARDS THE TRADE UNIONS: THE CASE OF KOCAELI**

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### **Abstract**

Since the early 1970's, while unions have been losing its base, discussions on member-union relationships and members' attitudes and behaviours towards the unions are getting more importance. As it is agreed, the results of researches on this topic can not be definite, since many factors of each country are really diagnostic.

In this sense, one of the important characteristics of Turkish trade unionism is public sector based unionism. Together with this difficulty, privatization policy at public sector diminishes the membership base of the unions during the last two decades. Therefore the future of unionism depends on keeping relationships with members alive and organizing employees at private sector primarily. In this context, the evaluation of members' attitudes towards the unions, the motives that lead up to membership and the analyzes of member-union relationships are getting importance in order to revitalise unionism.

In this sense, the paper will basically depend on the research that comprises both unionized and non-unionized workers' attitudes towards the unions at metal, food, textile and petrochemical-rubber private sectors in Kocaeli province. One of the major purpose of this research is to figure out the motives and the reasons of being a member to the unions. The other purposes of this research are to discuss the collective understanding of workers, the perception of workers on necessity of being a member, the understanding of workers on union policies and the member-trade union relationships.

Also this reserch will give us a chance to make a comparison with the results of another research that was done in 2004 at the same scope. So the paper might have chance to observe the changes in three years time.

*Keywords:* Workers' attitudes and behaviours, Unions-members relationships

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Keynesian model which had been applied until 1970's lost its efficiency when capitalist economic system underwent a crisis. New liberal policies and flexible manufacturing model adopted to overcome this crisis created a transformation which urged countries towards a new structuring and labour division in world economy and politics.

In this process, trade unions which are basic organizations of labour movement have lost considerable power and reliability. In parallel with this loss, debates regarding the fact that unions are in a representation crisis have arisen. The apparent part of this problem is the decrease in the number of union members.

According to data of Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MoL) which takes only the number of registered workers in Turkey as a basis, unionization rate which was 62.7% in 1992 decreased to 58.21% in 2006. On the other hand, unionization rate among civil servants which was 62% in 2002 decreased to 49.2% in 2006.[1] MoL data are questionable due to various reasons. Thus, different calculation methods regarding unionization rates have been tried. According to a study which was carried out by considering all of the salaried workers in Turkey, unionization rate was 22.2% in 1988, decreased to 15% in 2004. Besides, the number of beneficiaries of collective bargaining was calculated as 8% in 2004.(Celik,19.01.2007) Thus, reliability and solidarity problems experienced in unions where power of representation of workers is very low become more evident day by day.

## 2. OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS OF TURKISH TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

### 2.1. New Liberal Policies

1980s in Turkey is the period when economy was tried to be integrated to global system under the leadership of liberation of economic-financial system and private sector. In this process, privatizations were accelerated, public sector was gradually withdrawn from investments and intense incentives were made in export sectors.(Ansal,2000) Thus, public employment decreased and union movement which intensified in public sector lost members.

Another reality regarding growth in the open economy is economic crisis and instabilities which displayed their effect especially upon organized workers. Briefly, Turkish economy displays an image which is stuck between growth-crisis spiral in the last 15 years.(Yeldan, 2001) In this context, prohibitions imposed on union movement by legal and institutional arrangements in an open economy and crisis conditions have strengthened opportunities of employers to balance increasing competitiveness and profit rates especially by low wage strategy.

In brief, while collective disintegration among workers has accelerated with new liberal policies, insecurity has intensified, it has become more difficult for unions to get organized and solidarity has eroded.

### 2.2. Structure of Employment

Union movement in Turkey emerged and developed in an economic environment which was away from a process where majority of the society became workers

rapidly with industrialization as in the West.(Işıklı, 1993) Even today, only 57% of labour force is salaried workers and daily wage status. While no change has occurred in the rate of self-employed, the number of unpaid family workers has decreased depending on agricultural disintegration compared to 2004. This panorama is clear indicator of the fact that Turkish labour market does not have specific characteristics of salaried societies yet.

A considerable part of salaried workers are employed in small enterprises where informal relations are dominant. Actually, the economy is based on small enterprises. According to 2006 data in Turkey, 94% of private sector enterprises are composed of workplaces employing 1-24 workers. (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2006)

The rate of unregistered workers which was 53% in 2004 decreased to 45.6% in the first three months of 2007. It was determined in 2004 that 21.2% of salaried workers and 91.7% of daily wage earners worked unregistered. It is understood that this situation has not changed according to data of the first three months of 2007. According to data, the rate of unregistered salaried workers is 21.1% and the rate of unregistered daily wage earners is 89.5%.[2] Besides, structural unemployment is an another challenge to the union movement. At the first few months of the year 2007, unemployment rate is approximately 11% and goes up to 14% out of agricultural sector in Turkey.

Economic structure in Turkey which is stuck between growth-crisis spiral after 1980 due to insufficient industrialization and includes uncertainties has increased labour market segmentation, which is a general characteristic of developing countries. Today, labour market has a patchy image

composed of a large unqualified and unorganized group wary of social securities and with low wages except a narrow group employed in urban area composed of qualified workers who are union members and are under the scope of social security.(Senses, 2003) Consequently, these structural characteristics impair collective aspect of employment relations and icause unions to shrink and incline to more introvert and defensive politics.

### **2.3. Social Unreliability and Alternative Solidarities**

While liberal economy and disintegration in agricultural sector after 1980 have intensified immigration, a heterogenous social pattern has emerged where transitions among small entrepreneurship, marginal works, unregistered and registered employment are intensive. This structure in cities is fed from social mechanisms which provide solidarity that migrants have developed among themselves to adapt to city. Family and rural relations, religious organizations and other traditional solidarity types precede relations which enable migrants to hold onto daily life. The fact that shantytowns, which host a considerable part of urban population, provide traditinal solidarity that prevents a class-oriented solidarity, organization and politics which will integrate workers on the basis of common interests.(Sengül, 2002).

### **2.4. Approach of Employers**

Employers have tended to more aggressive disunionisation applications in public and private sectors due to increasing effect of liberal policies after 1980. As examples, contract personnel, subcontracting

and part-time employment have increased and many applications such as shifting production out of workplace, human resources policies have become widespread. Besides, employers in private sector abuse dismissal threat to prevent organizational efforts of unions and try to persuade workers to disunionisation by using informal relations such as ethnical discrimination, kinship as well as face-to-face negotiations even the law of job security was enacted.

Benefiting from legal loopholes and weaknesses of unions, employers disable organizational efforts in workplaces. On the other hand, unions have to carry out their organizational activities confidentially to prevent tactics of employers until they reach the necessary number of members in workplaces to be authorised for collective bargaining.

## **2.5. Union Structure and Problems**

Turkish trade unions could not attain ideological characteristic within their historical development. So unions emerged as organizations with the support of legal system have preferred to develop their relations with the government which has been in the position of employer and to conclude collective bargaining by reaching an agreement with ruling party due to public sector-oriented organization. Such a structure has resulted in development of a pragmatic and conciliatory union understanding based on wage bargaining. In other words, instead of supressing upon ruling party by dynamics of labour movement, unions have tried to resolve problems via laws on industrial relations.(Kutal, 1997) In this context, union movement could not develop representation capacity and democracy understanding

which will reflect workers' identity and voice in society.(Koray, 1994)

Indeed, one of the important characteristics of Turkish trade unions is that they have a central and bureaucratic structure which is not open to participation. In brief, consultation bodies(board of directors, regional representatives board, workplace union representatives and various committees) have been disabled against decision-making bodies. Undoubtedly, while it has strengthened central structure, union leadership and its administration have transformed into life-long professional activities. It is not possible to expect from such union structure to strengthen inter-union democracy.

## **3. WORKERS' ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS TOWARDS THE TRADE UNIONS AND RELIABILITY RELATION**

### **3.1. Objective**

The relation between workers and unions as well as workers' attitudes and behaviours to the unions are important determining factors in representation crisis trade unions experience. Thus, it is necessary that the relation of unions both with their members and potential members should be examined. However, it is necessary to state that quality of these relations is affected by macro and organizational factors. The main objective of this study is to determine workers' attitudes and behaviours to the unions within the framework of factors which we have tried to outline above.

### 3.2. Background of The Scope of Study

The study has been carried out in four sectors (metal, food, textile and petrochemical/rubber sectors) which have importance in industry both in city of Kocaeli and Turkey. The proportion of the number of workers employed in Turkey in these 4 sectors to the total number of workers employed in all sectors is 35.51%.

*Table 1. Unionized & Non-unionized Workers in the City of Kocaeli (January 2006)*

	Unionized (%)	Non-unionized (%)
<b>Metal</b>	64	36
<b>Food</b>	60	40
<b>Textile</b>	41	59
<b>Petrochemical</b>	79	21
<b>/Rubber</b>		

Textile sector where flexibility and subcontracting gained importance after 1980, metal sector which especially hosts international automotive sector and where flexibility gains depth especially in sub-sectors, petrochemical/rubber sector where privatization, foreign capital investments and technological changes are important as well as food sector which has decreased in employment and export shares (Bugra) have been taken within the scope of the study.

Unionization rate in private sector in Turkey is 52.11% for petrochemical/rubber sector, 78.12% for food sector, 83.48% for textile sector and 69.32% for metal sector. (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2006) The unionization rate of three sectors except petrochemical/rubber in private sector of Kocaeli and especially in textile sector is lower than the general of

Turkey<sup>1</sup>. The unionization rates in metal and food sectors are close to the average in Turkey. The unionization rate in private sector in Kocaeli (73%) is higher than total unionization rate in Turkey (58%).

In brief, these four sectors are important both for worker density and union movement in the process where unions lose members and the scope of collective bargaining narrows in the city of Kocaeli and Turkey as well.

### 3.3. Data Collection Method

Questionnaire method is used in collection of data and information. The questionnaire conducted on 411 workers whose 273 is unionized and 138 is non-unionized who are employed in textile, food, petrochemical/rubber and metal sectors in İstanbul and Kocaeli in 2004 is applied to the study<sup>2</sup>. But data covering only Kocaeli are taken into account in the comparison between 2004 and 2007.

### 3.4. Sample

The sample is composed of unionized and non-unionized workers employed in private sector in Kocaeli. 400 questionnaires have been targeted but 300 questionnaires have been applied and of these 277 have been found to be valid. It has been preferred that questionnaires are carried out face-to-face. However, since unionized workers do not have enough spare time in workplaces as well as problems we have encountered in accessing to non-unionized workplaces necessitate that some questionnaire forms are distributed and filled out of workplaces and some are filled in groups. Another problem experienced during questionnaire application is worry and fear which workers have felt

<sup>1</sup>Registered workers are taken into consideration at these calculations

<sup>2</sup>Rvss

*Table 2. Dispersion of Respondent Workers' Groups Employed in Establishments at Private Sector in Kocaeli (2007)*

Number of Workers' Groups	%
1 – 9	4.8
10 – 24	1.8
25 – 49	2.6
50 – 99	4.1
<b>100 – 249</b>	<b>34.3</b>
<b>250 – 499</b>	<b>17.7</b>
<b>500 +</b>	<b>34.7</b>
Total	100

against themselves and their employers while answering questions. Thus, especially women and non-unionized workers have been reluctant to answer questions.

### 3.5. Results and Evaluations

#### 3.5.1. Worker Profile

Organization in Turkey has been focused on medium and especially large-sized enterprises since organization in small-sized enterprises is difficult and unions exclude mostly small-sized enterprises from their targets. In this sense, 86.7% of those answering questionnaire within the scope of the study, 99.5% of those who are members of unions and 60% of non-unionized workers are employed in workplaces employing 100 or above workers.

When gender of respondents is considered, it has been observed that 85.9% of them are males and 11.6% of them are

females. 70.4% of male respondents are unionized, 29.6% of them are non-unionized and 48.4% of female respondents are unionized, 51.6% of them are non-unionized. It has been observed in age dispersion of participants that 52.4% of them are below 30. Also 54% of 277 respondents are employed in metal sector; 27.8% are employed in petrochemical/rubber sector; 11.6% are employed in textile sector and 4.7% are employed in food sector.

*Table 3. Main Criteria That Workers Use for Self-Identification (%)*

	2004	2007
<b>Religion</b>	17.7	27.8
<b>Nationality</b>	35	26
<b>Social Class</b>	26.6	15.9
Gender		5.8
Profession		4.7
Hometown		4
Political preference		2.2
Workplace		0.4
Other		5.8
Missing		7.6
Total		100

#### 3.5.2. Self-Identifications of Workers

Research data reveal that workers tend to identify themselves mostly according to religion(27.8%), nationality(26%) and social class(15.9%). It has also been observed that the tendency of never-members to identify themselves according to nationality(32.9%) and current-members tend to identify themselves according to religion(30.2%) are higher. The tendency of both groups to

identify themselves according to social class(17.5%) is relatively low.

When these are compared to the results of the study carried out in 2004, it has been observed that the tendency of workers to identify themselves according to nationality and social class decreased in 2007(from 35% to 26% and from 26.6% to 15.9%, respectively). On the other hand, the tendency to identify according to religion increased(from 17% to 27.8%).

This result may be related to general political conditions of Turkey. It can be suggested that alternative identities such as nationality, locality and religion come to prominence in individual and collective identity in the new period. One of the important reasons of this may result from the fact that workers perceive these identities as an instrument for feeling safe against uncertainty and instability in economic and social fields as well as for feeling a sense of belonging.

**3.5.3. The Reliability Problem With Unions**

Unequality and uncertainty created by migration and economic crisis which have increased as a result of new liberal policies after 1980 strengthen fatalist, sceptic and introvert individual perception and increase alination of individuals to society. Many reasons such as difficulty of social movement opportunities, prolongation of lawsuits in judicial process, corruptions in public administration, weakening of social policies have increased individuals' lack of confidence in collective organizations and each other.(Azkan, 2001) According to results of a study carried out on values of Turkish society, 90% of participants stated that "it is necessary to be careful when you

Table 4. Reliability of Institutions in Turkey

Institutions	%
Army	47.6
Presidency	14.2
Courts	11.8
Religious Institutions	5.9
Universities	4.3
Trade Unions	4.3
NGOs	3.5
Parliament	3.1
Political Parties	2.8
Police	1.6
Employers' Unions	0.8
Total	100

Table 5. "In Turkey, trade unions are reliable institutions" (%)

	Definitely disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Definitely agree	Average Score
2004	9.9	32.5	28.1	23.6	5.9	2.83
2007	19.3	25.6	32.6	19.6	3	2.61

establish a relation or make business with others". Namely, they do not trust people.(Gökce, 2001)

It is observed that there is a considerable lack of confidence in basic institutions of democratic society in Turkey. In another

Table 6. "In Turkey, trade unions are reliable institutions" (2007)(Average Score)

	Never-members	Ex-members	Current-members
<b>In Turkey, trade unions are reliable institutions</b>	<b>2.44</b>	1.96	<b>2.79</b>

study, it has been found that the most important problems which should be resolved in society are expensiveness and unemployment but the confidence in political parties, parliament, government and unions, which are important institutions in solving such problems, is low. Contrary to these institutions, the army is the most reliable institution with 77%. According to the results of the study which covers 3021 people from various cities, 34% of participants stated that they trust unions and 25% stated that they trust at medium level and 42% stated that they do not trust unions.(Adaman, 2002) This situation indicates that unions have problems in their relations with society and these problems may be related to general lack of confidence which is widespread among society.

The lack of confidence problem between society and unions can also be observed between workers and unions. According to the results of the study we carried out in 2007, the rate of workers who think that army is the most reliable is 47.6% and the rate of those who consider unions as the most reliable organization is only 4%.

As can be seen from the table above, workers are mostly undecided and in negative attitude regarding confidence in

Table 7. "Can Trade Unions Protect and Advance Employees' Rights and Interests in Turkey?" (%)

	Yes	No	Undecided
<b>2004</b>	<b>10.8</b>	82.3	<b>6.9</b>
<b>2007</b>	<b>7.6</b>	82.5	<b>9.9</b>

unions. When compared to the results of 2004 study, it has been observed that these tendencies have not changed much but negative attitude has strengthened. Nevertheless, while the rate of those who find unions reliable was 29.5% in 2004, this rate decreased to 22.6% in 2007.

When results are evaluated in relation to union membership variable, it has been seen that a meaningful difference has emerged in relation to level of confidence in unions. Level of confidence of never-members and especially ex-members is found to be lower than current-members.

### 3.5.4. The Problem of Unions With Protection of Rights and Interests

How union policies are perceived in general and whether they are successful are related to union's power and confidence. In this regard, the fact that workers think positively about union's protection and advancement of rights and interests increases membership tendency of non-unionized workers and satisfaction level of unionized workers. The study has tried to put forward general opinions of unionized and non-unionized workers in Turkey regarding union movement and the success of union politics.

The table 7., demonstrates that the belief among workers that unions can protect their

Table 8. "Can Trade Unions Protect and Advance Employees' Rights and Interests in Turkey?" (%)

	YES	NO	Undecided
<b>Never-members</b>	6.8	78	15.3
<b>Ex-members</b>	0	<b>100</b>	0
<b>Current-members</b>	8.9	81.6	9.5
<b>Total</b>	7.6	<b>82.5</b>	9.9

rights and interests is very low. When the results of 2004 and 2007 are compared, it is observed that this negativity has not changed. However, a decrease in the rate of those who think positively and an increase in the rate of undecided people have been observed.

When the results are evaluated in relation to union membership, striking differences have been observed. 81.6% of current-members and all of the ex-members believe that unions can not protect and advance rights and interests of workers. Observations made during the questionnaire indicate that this situation may be related to union membership experience.

When workers who think that unions cannot protect and advance workers' rights and interests sufficiently are asked the reasons of this situation, employer's pressure, anti-democratic laws and inadequacy of unionists are stated frankly within the scope of 2007 study. It has been observed among workers that the tendency to associate the roots of failure of unions with external conditions is higher. However, opinions of workers differ according to membership variable. As can be extracted from the relevant table, never-members and ex-members think that this problem results from inadequacy of unionists. Besides, 31%

Table 9. Reasons Regarding Why Trade Unions Can Not Protect Rights and Interests of Trade Unions (%)

Statements	Current-members	Never-members	Ex-members	Total
Laws are anti-democratic	<b>31.8</b>	13.3	16.7	<b>26.3</b>
Employers' pressure on workers	<b>29.1</b>	<b>31.1</b>	16.7	<b>28.1</b>
Unionists are inadequate	17.6	<b>40</b>	<b>45.8</b>	<b>25.3</b>
Inadequate union democracy	6.8	2.2	0	5.1
Workers do not trust unions	1.4	8.9	8.3	3.7
Dialogue with other unions is inadequate	8.8	2.2	8.3	7.4
Dialogue with employers is inadequate	1.4	0	4.2	1.4
Other	3.4	0	2.2	2.8

Table 10. "Can Trade Unions Protect and Advance Employees' Rights and Interests in Turkey?" (%)

	YES	NO	Undecided
<b>Current-members</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>81.6</b>	<b>9.5</b>

Table 11. "My trade union can protect the workers' rights and interests" (%)

	YES	NO	Undecided
<b>2004</b>	<b>41.9</b>	<b>48.8</b>	<b>9.4</b>
<b>2007</b>	<b>17.7</b>	<b>60.6</b>	<b>21.7</b>

of never-members point out employers' pressure as well. Both groups also attach lower importance to anti-democratic laws as a reason. On the other hand, current-members think anti-democratic laws as first and employers' pressures as the second reason of why unions can not protect rights and interests of workers. In addition, it is striking that these two reasons are very close and predominant proportionally.

As can be seen, the tendency of current-members to associate failure of unions with anti-democratic laws is higher than both never-members and ex-members. This situation possibly stems from the fact that unions inform their members about laws very well. Another possible reason of this situation is that the tendency of professional unionists to associate the failure in union movement with laws is strong.(Bugra) Indeed, an industrial relations model based on laws prevails in Turkey. Thus, laws both have been the basis of unions and an area of struggle and complaint for unionists for a

long time.

### 3.5.5. The Problem of Unions With Protection of Rights and Interests of Their Members

Current-members indicate that they think more positively about the success of their union in relation to protecting rights and interests compared to the general belief in Turkey. As can be seen from the relevant table, according to the results of 2007 study, 81.6% of current-members believe that unions in Turkey can not protect workers' rights and interests, this rate decreases to 60.6% for their own union.

However, when the results of 2007 are compared to the results of 2004, it is observed among current-members that negative opinions regarding the success of their unions in relation to protection of rights and interests of workers and the rate of those who are undecided have strikingly increased in 2007. It may be considered that factors such as economic crisis, regression in real wages, flexibility, unemployment, shrinking of coverage of collective bargaining and the lack of confidence are effective upon this process.

### 3.5.6. Why Do Workers Not Become Members?

The answer of why workers do not become members of unions lies in external conditions as well as workers' perception of unions. As known, there are many reasons which affect general and specific attitudes of workers towards unions. The most prominent one is workers' experiences with unions. Thus, union membership is effective upon workers' attitudes. It is possible to see the difference created by this effect in all

Table 12. The Reasons That Workers Are Not Being Members of Unions (%)

	<b>Never-members</b>	<b>Ex-members</b>	<b>Total</b>
I don't trust trade unions	<b>25.9</b>	<b>34.8</b>	<b>28.6</b>
No union organized in the workplace	<b>27.8</b>	13	<b>23.4</b>
My current situation in the workplace don't change with membership	14.8	8.7	<b>13</b>
Employers' pressures(dismissal, and threat etc...)	5.6	<b>21.7</b>	10.4
I don't believe in the union officials	7.4	<b>8.7</b>	<b>7.8</b>
My other friends do not have a union membership	<b>9.3</b>	0	6.5
Unions can not meet the expectations of their members	3.7	0	<b>2.6</b>
I can solve my workplace problems with the employer or the management	0	0	1.3
I don't want to pay the membership fee	1.9	0	1.3
Other	3.7	8.7	5.2

questionnaires where membership is used as a variable. It is also observed in the results regarding why workers do not become members of unions that there is a perception difference according to membership variable.

As mentioned before, unionization of workers in private sector becomes more difficult due to external conditions. In addition to this, observations point out that workers do not believe the possibility that membership will create a condition in favour of them and also they do not believe to overcome risks to be created by membership with the support of unions.

Indeed, 28.6% of workers stated that they do not become union members since they do not trust unions, 13% of workers believe that their current situation in workplace will not change with membership, 7.8% of workers do not believe in union officials and 2.6% of workers believe that unions can not meet the expectations of members. These results indicate that totally 52% of workers do not become members due to reasons arising from lack of confidence in unions in general.

Another important result is that never-members stated as the leading reason of why they do not become members that there is no any organized union in their

workplace(27.8%). When the rate of never-members and stated that they do not become union members since their friends are not union members is taken into account(9.3%), the rate of never-members since there is no organization in workplace increases to 37.1% among never-members. This situation is worth mentioning since it demonstrates that weakness of a social environment in workplaces which will discourage membership is an important factor regarding that workers do not become union members. Thus, unorganization leads to unorganization once again. So the results point out to inadequacy of communication level of unions with never-members and to the importance of organization in workplace under the leadership of unions.

Reasons regarding why workers do not become union members display considerable differences according to membership variable. 27.8% of never-members stated that they do not become members since there is no any organized union in the workplace and 25.9% of never-members stated that they do not become members since they do not trust unions. However, it is understood that lack of confidence in unions(34.8%), problem of disbelief towards union officials

(8.7%) and employers' pressure(21.7%) are important reasons which affect the fact that ex-members do not become union members. This situation demonstrates that ex-members are more informed and experienced about unions than never-members and the great extent of employers' pressure on ex-members is more evident especially in the phase of organization and during termination of membership.

### 3.5.7. Workers' Opinions Regarding Trade Unions

#### a. General Opinions of Workers Regarding Trade Unions

General attitudes towards unions result from workers' opinions regarding objectives, successes and leadership of unions. In this sense, the results of the study indicate that it is not true to say that unions have lost their importance from the standpoint of workers. It is observed that workers are generally in a positive attitude towards union movement and organization. Such as; 77.1% of workers responded positively to the expression of "trade unions are necessary to protect rights and interests of workers" and 67.4% of

Table 13. The Reasons That Workers Are Not Being Members of Unions (%)

	Definitely disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Definitely Agree
Unions are democratic institutions that provide solidarity and cooperation	4,9	15,4	14,7	45,5	19,5
Unions are necessary for protecting the rights and interests of workers	3	8,9	11,1	41,5	35,6
If workers become union members, their working conditions will improve	1,9	12,2	18,5	39,6	27,8
Unions are organizations that defend rights and interets of all workers	13,1	28,5	16,1	27,8	13,5

workers stated that they believe union membership improves working conditions. And also the rate of workers who think that unions are organizations which provide workers' unity and solidarity is 65%.

As it is observed in other results, there are important differences in attitudes towards union movement according to membership variable. As can be understood from the relevant table, current-members demonstrate a more positive attitude than never-members or ex-members. Besides, ex-members demonstrate the most negative attitudes towards union movement.

When the results of 2007 are compared to the results of 2004, it is observed that attitudes towards union movement have not changed much but positive attitudes have slightly weakened. For example, while 85% of respondents in 2004 study think that trade unions are necessary to protect rights and interests of workers, this rate decreased to 77% in 2007.

#### *b. Opinions of Members Regarding Their Unions*

Obtaining better working conditions and wages on behalf of their members by concluding collective agreements is almost only and the most important activity of unions in Turkey. In this context, positive answer given by current-members to the expression "my working conditions have improved with union membership"(64.4%) is notable in relation to emphasizing the importance of collective agreements. In brief, current-members tend to think that union membership has improved their working conditions. Besides, the expression "the worst trade union is better than non-existence of trade union" used widely among current-members while the study was being carried out made us think that current-members have made this evaluation by considering working conditions of ununionized workplaces in general.

*Table 14. Attitudes and Evaluations of Workers Regarding Trade Unions According to Years (2004- 2007) (Average Score)*

	<b>2004</b>	<b>2007</b>
Unions are democratic institutions that provide solidarity and cooperation	<b>3.78</b>	<b>3.59</b>
Unions are necessary for protecting the rights and interests of workers	<b>4.17</b>	<b>3.98</b>
If workers become union members, their working conditions will improve	<b>3.91</b>	<b>3.79</b>
Unions protect rights and interests of all workers	<b>---</b>	<b>3.01</b>

On the other hand, undecidedness(26.5%) and negative opinions(39.3%) regarding the expression "members are influential upon union policies" which aims to evaluate the relations of members with union organized

Table 15. Attitudes and Evaluations of Members Regarding Their Unions (%) (2007)

	<b>2004</b>	<b>2007</b>
Unions are democratic institutions that provide solidarity and cooperation	<b>3.78</b>	<b>3.59</b>
Unions are necessary for protecting the rights and interests of workers	<b>4.17</b>	<b>3.98</b>
If workers become union members, their working conditions will improve	<b>3.91</b>	<b>3.79</b>
Unions protect rights and interests of all workers	<b>---</b>	<b>3.01</b>

Table 16. Attitudes and Evaluations of Members Regarding Their Unions (Average Score)

	<b>Definitely disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Definitely Agree</b>
My working conditions were improved with my membership to union	<b>6.1</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>17.2</b>	<b>46.1</b>	<b>18.3</b>
Members are influential on union's politics	<b>12.2</b>	<b>27.1</b>	<b>26.5</b>	<b>16.2</b>	<b>9.4</b>
I trust my union in usage of membership fees & financial resources	<b>14.0</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>39.3</b>	<b>29.2</b>	<b>3.9</b>
My union is a democratic union & provides solidarity & cooperation among all members	<b>8.8</b>	<b>26.9</b>	<b>29.1</b>	<b>20.6</b>	<b>3.8</b>
All members are informed about my union activities, decisions & policies	<b>7.2</b>	<b>29.4</b>	<b>26.1</b>	<b>27.8</b>	<b>9.4</b>

in the workplace and members' effects upon union policies are important points. In addition to this, although the rates of those who give positive answers(37.2%) and those

who give negative answers(36.6%) to the expression "all members are informed about activities, decisions and policies of unions" are very close to each other, when those who

Table 17. Attitudes and Evaluations of Members Regarding Their Unions (Average Score)

	Average Score	
	2004	2007
My working conditions were improved with my membership to union	3.92	3.58
Members are influential on union's politics	3.28	2.92
I trust my union in usage of membership fees & financial resources	3.36	2.96
My union is a democratic union & provides solidarity & cooperation among all members	3.48	2.95
All members have knowledge about my union activities, decisions & policies	3.57	3.03

are undecided(26.1%) are taken into consideration, it will not be wrong to express that members' relations with unions are problematic. Indeed, only 25.6% of current-members believe that they are effective upon union policies, 24.4% of current-members believe that their unions provide unity and solidarity of all members and are democratic and 37.2% of current-members believe that all members are informed about decisions, policies and activities of union. When all these results are evaluated together, it is seen that positive opinions of current-members regarding their unions are not very strong.

When compared to the results of 2004 study, it is seen that average points of answers given to all expressions in 2007 study have relatively decreased. This situation which can be evaluated as a negative development indicates in most general terms that the relations of unions with their members tend to weaken.

#### 4.CONCLUSION

The results of the study and observations indicate that workers' confidence and

disbelief towards union movement in general and their unions decrease as long as unions lose power and follow introvert and defensive policies. On the other hand unionization becomes more and more vital from day to day especially due to negativity in working conditions in Turkey. In this context, according to the study results, 74.1% of workers stated that they want to become union members if reasons preventing membership to unions are removed. On the other hand, 75.3% of never-members stated that any union manager did not contact with them for membership request until today. Both these results and other observations indicate that unions have not tend to policy change in relation to this demand.

It is also observed that pragmatism among workers becomes widespread especially through deterioration of working conditions. In our question regarding "what should the target of trade unions be in the long term?", 46.4% of current-members stated that they should provide workers better wages and working conditions, 24.3% of current-members stated that they should provide unity of unions and make them stronger in

Turkey and only 16% of current-members stated that they should try to increase society's welfare rather than workers. However, a contrary result was obtained in 2004 study. While 33.8% of current-members have emphasized the importance of trying to increase society's welfare and 30.6% of current-members have emphasized the importance of providing unity of unions and making them stronger in Turkey and only 22.5% of current-members believe that the most important target of unions in the long term should be providing workers better wages and working conditions. In this context, it can be suggested that while core labour force shrinks, the tendency of unionized workers who are core labour move with the instinct of protecting their wages and working conditions.

Today, workers associate failure of unions with employers' pressure, inadequacy of unionists, anti-democratic laws as well as uninterest of workers. Although aggressive attitudes of employers towards unions and the fear of workers are important, it is necessary that trade unions think about why they can not assume responsibility against employers' threat or eliminate workers' fears and draw them into unions.

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