Women Garment Employees: Issues and Problems

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Abstract:

The Garment industry is an age-old industry in India. The industry has contributed heavily to Indian exports. Being the second highest employment generating sector, women employees are been dominated in the workforce. The industry is encouraging the women empowerment. The increasing number of women employment rates in India, adding for the economic development of the individual household as well as for the nation. The study was aimed at identifying the various issues and problems faced by these garment working women in their personal as well as in professional life. The study was been conducted based on the primary data captured through well-constructed questionnaires. The variables were been identified through the review of the literature. The data collected from 570 respondents were been analyzed using Garrett ranking method. Various health, personal organization as well as job oriented issues and problems were been identified.

Key words: Garment industry, women empowerment, workforce, employment, etc,.

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I. Introduction

The Garment industry is one of the booming industries in India. Being an age-old industry, the growth of the industry is worth appreciating during the recent past. As a part of the textile industry, garment & apparels contributes 69% of the share of the overall market, whereas textile contributes 31 % according to the 2012 survey. Ready-made garments itself carry 39% of the share which is the largest contribution. The garment industry contribution to the economy is increasing year on year. Indian garment shipment rose from $ 8.7 billion to $ 13.8 billion during 2005 – 2012. Between Jan to Oct 2013, ready-made shipments by Indian exporter to US grew by 6.3% to $ 3.2 billion. The industry contribution has slightly fluctuated because of the US & UK economic slowdown. But companies are coming out with the alternative strategies to cover the losses. Gurgaon based garment exporter creating a path for other garment companies towards their new venture. They have tapped a new market of Brazil, Russia, Japan & Israel which helped to raise the export percentage by around 8% to 10 % in the last quarter of 2013. India was one of the top 10 exporters in the year 2015. The textile and garments export was US$38.70 billion in the FY 2019 and expected to grow up to US$ 82.00 billion[8].The sector is the second largest employment generating sector. It has provided employment opportunity for about 35 million populations in India. Being the labor-intensive sector, it has been observed the mismanaged human resource.

The textile and garment industries are providing immense opportunities for female worker to have empowerment. Women's economic independence and self-confidence have been observed being increased. The women employee's attitude has changed along with raised morale [7]. The female employee percentages are high compared to male co-workers in the industry. The female employees are more satisfied and less depressed compared to their male counterparts working in the industry. With various issues and problems related to their financial and non-financial benefits, female employees have valued their respective organizations. The rigid policy and controlled workplace like female supervisions, higher presence of a female, attitude of the management towards the female employees work-life balance can be found in the garment and apparel industries [6]. The growing technology and easy adoption made the garment

industry to be dynamic and hunt for the skilled labor force. The women employees were been perceived as less knowledgeable, poor aptitude, limited skills, and interest and lack of work habit. This further changing the scenario by throwing the opportunity to the male. It is making the female be more competitive and upgrade themselves to the latest requirement. Being two third of the workforce, women employees are facing various constraints like job insecurities, harassment, and overtime at work place [9]. The rest of the article is organized as follows: Section II describes review of literature. In Section III explain the methodologies employed in garment industry. Section IV describes result of the survey. Finally, section V concludes the research article.

II. Review of Literature

The female employees working in the lower level jobs found their work more monotonous and strainful to their body, which acted as the factor of dissatisfaction. Due to the continuous work and limited breaks, these workers were exposed to illness and diseases like headaches, eye problems, ear problems, musculoskeletal pain. These kinds of workers are found in secured in their work place and while traveling. They are more prone to harassment from their supervisors and coworkers at their work station [1]. Garment employee's wages/salaries, working conditions, benefits, supervisor's treatment, and limited growth opportunities are considering factors that led to employee dissatisfaction [2]. Being the most important export-based industry ready-made garment factory employees (80%) are facing vulnerable physical and psychological health problems due to the poor work environment and hectic job.[10] The stress is going to impact the satisfaction level of the employees, physical and psychological health and impacts on the emotional state, and behavior of the employees. The job related organization associated, social and personal oriented issues are considered as the prime factor for the stress for the garment working women. The organization related issues had a determinant effect on the employee's health and well being [4].Discrimination has been identified very commonly in the apparel and garment manufacturing industry. Less focus was been given towards pregnant women working in the industry. Even with well-defined labor laws in the country, these workers continuously exposed to abuses and discriminations. The exploitation was been identified in the area of organizational benefits, wages and salaries, unpaid/ less paid overtime jobs, hiring and firing of employees, and promotions [3]. The manufacturing industry has a high level of threat of occupational diseases and general health and safety problems [5]. Most of the garment workers are not satisfied with the workload, deadlines, and duration of the work. They are been discriminated against by their male co-workers on the training, promotion, and retaining over job[9]. The textile and garments are the factories dominated by women employees for a long period. Most of the women workers working in the informal sectors had been facing high working hours, rigid production policies and norms, discipline, continuous and rigorous jobs [11]. The major problems faced by the garment workers are poor ventilation, congested work floor, workplace, weak illumination, excessive noise, dust, and lack of safety equipment [12]. The garment working women in Bangladesh had various health issues like anorexia, nausea, Epigastric pain, Dysmenorrhea where almost half of them were underweight. Most of them (22%) do not go to doctors related to their health issues [13].

III. Methodology

The garment manufacturers are the prime contributors for the Indian export transactions in comparison with textile as well as apparel manufacturer. The garment factories are been located all over India specifically south India is considered as the hub (IBEF, 2018). As Karnataka is one of the major garment manufacturing hubs, the study was restricted to Karnataka as the geographical region. As the industry is dominated by women employees compare to their male counterparts, female employees were selected for the study. A well-structured questionnaire was been constructed by considering ten different dimensions of the workers issues and responses was been captures from nearly 570 female worker's working in various parts of Karnataka. To capture the data the researcher has personally visited the factories and collected the response. As most of the respondents are comfortable with the

regional language, the questionnaire was been translated to the regional language for receiving unambiguous response from the sample. Based on reviews, the common problems of garment workers were been identified and listed under ten different categories. The respondents were asked to rank the stated problems on a scale of 1 to 5. (1= most affected problem and 5 = least affected problem) The reliability was been tested through using chron back alpha. For analyzing the ranking scale questions, The Garrett Ranking method was been used. The given responses were been converted into the ranks with the help of the formula- Percentage position =100(R_{ij}-0.5)/N_j given by Henry Garrett. The Pretest was been conducted among 50 garment workers, with minor modification in the questionnaire the remaining responses was been captured. The objectives of the study are to identify and explore the various issues and problems faced by the garment working women related to a job, organization, health and safety, and personal.

IV. Results and discussion

A. Respondents profile:

The garment working women face various issues and challenge at their work environment. Based on Table 1,majority of the respondents for the study were belonging to the age group of 18-30(42.11%) and 31-40 (35.96%) where 15.79 % and 6.14% were of 41- 50 years and above 50 years of age. The education was below 7th standard (33%) and 10th(33.51) and 8.60%, 5.61% are having a degree, and other qualifications. A total of 73% of the respondents were married and 13% unmarried, 5.96% divorcee, and 6.67% were widow/single parents. Most of the respondents had dependent children (59.76%) and 40% of the respondent does not have dependent children. Nearly 73% of the respondents live in a nuclear family and 27% of them live in a joint family.

Table 1.The demographic profile of the respondents shows that

Personal Profile		No of respondents	Percentage
Age in yrs	18 – 30	240	42.11
	31 - 40	205	35.96
	41 – 50	90	15.79
	Above 50	35	6.14
Education	Below 7th Std	212	37.19
	SSLC	191	33.51
	PUC	86	15.09
	Degree	49	8.60
	Others	32	5.61
Marital status	Married	421	73.86
	Unmarried	77	13.51
	Divorcee	34	5.96
	Widow	38	6.67
Dependent children	Yes	245	59.76
	No	165	40.24
Family type	Joint	154	27.02
	Nuclear	416	72.98

B. Job-related issue:

Table 2 indicates the most predominant issues been faced by the garment working women about the job oriented issues. As per the Garrett ranking score compensation to the job (58.91) is considered to be the most important issue followed with work-related pressure (58.14) consider as the second most important issue faced by the worker. Job extended benefits (51.65) were considered as the third most important factor and job insecurity is ranked as fourth and working time is ranked as fifth. Therefore garment working women find compensation and work-related pressure as the major problem related to the job.

Table 2. Garment workers problem related to the job

Sl. No.	Issues	Mean	SD	Garrett Score	Garrett Rank
1	Work related pressure	2.31	1.37	58.14	II
2	Job extended benefits	2.86	1.26	51.65	III
3	Compensation to the job	2.25	1.36	58.91	I
4	Insecurity of job	3.27	1.19	46.67	IV
5	Working time	4.02	1.12	37.12	V

C. Company related issues:

The garment working women are exposed to various issues while working in an organization. Table 3 shows the most common organization related issues faced by these workers. The rigid HR policy (54.29) was ranked first followed bya lack of support from the management (51.97) as a second. The lack of support and assistance (50.29) from the supervisors was been ranked as the third most common issue. The facilities inside the organization(47.54) and policies and practices related to leave and the holiday was been ranked as fourth and fifth.

Table 3. Garment workers company related problems

Sl.No	Issues	Mean	SD	Garrett Score	Garrett Rank
1	Facilities inside the organization	3.17	1.55	47.54	IV
2	Support from the management	2.84	1.38	51.97	II
3	Rigid HR policy	2.66	1.34	54.29	I
4	Supervisors assistance and support	2.95	1.26	50.29	III
5	Policy related to leave and Holiday	3.20	1.49	47.18	V

D. Occupational related issue:

Some of the major and common problems faced by the garment working women related to their profession and occupation were considered for the study. Table 4 indicates that garment working women frequently face the problem of eye and head ache (60.76) and ranked as first by most of the respondents followed with the body pains (51.29) which was been ranked as second. These women were facing some respiratory issues (49.96) and occupational fatigue (46.56)was been ranked as third and fourth. Where other health-related issues(39.92) were been ranked at the fifth position by the respondents.

Table 4. Garment workers occupation related issues

Sl.No	Issues	Mean	SD	Garrett Score	Garrett Rank
1	Frequent eye pain and Headache	2.08	1.10	60.76	I
2	Respiratory issues	3.21	1.42	49.96	III
3	occupational fatigue	3.02	1.42	46.56	IV
4	Body pains	2.88	1.19	51.29	II
5	Other health issues	3.81	1.25	39.92	V

E. General problems:

Most of the working women are facing some of the socio-psychological issues while working. Table 5 shows the most predominant issues were been evaluated to explore the problem faced by garment working women. Disrespect / low dignity of labor (59.23) was been ranked first by most of the respondents. Taking care of

their children (54.44) and traveling (49.56) from far off distance were some of the general issues ranked as second and third. Emotional dis-connectivity and organizational polities were been ranked as fourth and fifth.

Table 5. Garment workers general problems

Sl.No	Issues	Mean	SD	Garrett Score	Garrett Rank
1	Traveling	3.02	1.32	49.56	III
2	Children care	2.60	1.42	54.44	II
3	Disrespect / low dignity of labour	2.23	1.19	59.23	I
4	Emotional dis-connectivity	3.25	1.32	46.61	IV
5	Organizational politics	3.66	1.14	42.20	V

F. Physical environment:

The garment manufacturing companies work under a modified physical environment. Table 6 indicates the problem faced by the women workers in the garment industry related to the physical environment. The most common problem was the lack of proper sanitary facilities(63.21) which was been ranked first. Drinking water facility(55.01) and artificial light and ventilation (48.56) were impacting on their health was been ranked as second and third. The fourth and fifth-ranked problems were limited working space(42.40) and limited medical facilities (41.57).

Table 6. Garment workers issues related to the physical environment

Sl.No	Issues	Mean	SD	Garrett Score	Garrett Rank
1	Artificial light and ventilation	3.08	1.22	48.56	III
2	Limited working space	3.69	1.21	42.40	IV
3	Medical facility	3.65	1.37	41.57	V
4	Sanitation facility	1.90	1.12	63.21	I
5	Drinking water facility	2.52	1.21	55.01	II

G. Discrimination related issues:

Table 7 indicates the predominant discrimination related issues faced by garment working women. Most commonly observed discrimination while granting leaves (61.97) and at the time of increment or incentive (48.89) providing, which was been ranked as a first and second important issue. Discrimination was been observed while removing/ firing (48.48)the employees which was ranked as third. Age and gender specific discrimination (47.82) and discrimination while promoting (43.1) the employees were been ranked as fourth and fifth.

Table 7. Garment workers issues related to discrimination

Sl.No	Issues	Mean	SD	Garrett Score	Garrett Rank
1	Gender/age specific discrimination	3.15	1.39	47.82	IV
2	Discrimination in increments/ incentives	3.08	1.20	48.89	II
3	Discrimination while granting of Leave	2.02	1.23	61.97	I
4	Discrimination while employee removal	3.11	1.19	48.48	III
5	Discriminati	3.55	1.2	43.01	V

	on during Promotion	8

H. Abuses and Harassment related issues:

The common problem faced by most of the working women is harassment. Table 8 explores the common abuses and harassment faced by working women in the garment industry. Sexual harassment (55.89) was been ranked as first followed by religion based harassment (52.08) and physical disability (48.97) based abuses and harassment was been ranked as second and third in the list. These workers have even faced the challenges against retaliation (48.07) and ethnic related (43.48) abuses and harassment.

Table 8. Garment workers issues related to abuses and harassment

Sl.No	Issues	Mean	SD	Garrett Score	Garrett Rank
1	Physical disability	3.08	1.28	48.97	III
2	Retaliation	3.14	1.36	48.07	IV
3	Sexual	2.52	1.58	55.89	I
4	Religious	2.81	1.35	52.08	II
5	Racial/Ethnic	3.47	1.42	43.48	V

I. Stress related Issues:

Table 9 shows the problems encountered by the garment women workers due to stress. Psychological or mental disturbance (56.07) was been ranked as first and body pains/ health issues/ physical problems (54.97) were given the second rank. The impact on personal life and self well being due to stress was been ranked as third and fourth. Increased error over the job was been given the fifth rank.

Table 9. Garment workers issues related to stress

Sl.No	Issues	Mean	SD	Garrett Score	Garrett Rank
1	Body pain/ Health issues	2.58	1.27	54.97	II
2	Mental Disturbance	2.46	1.16	56.07	I
3	Impact on personal life	2.76	1.33	52.95	III
4	Impact on self wellbeing	3.19	1.27	47.97	IV
5	Increased Job errors	4.01	1.12	37.23	V

J. Personal Life related issues:

Most of the garment workers take up the job to support economically to their family. Some of them face problems in balancing their personal and professional life. Table 10 indicates the various problems faced by the female employees working in garment factories. Taking unexpected or unavoidable leaves (58.44) is considered to be the most important issue for these workers and ranked one. Taking care of their dependents like children or elders was the second most challenge (52.50). No proper support from the family (49.72) and family safety and security (47.62) was one of the concerns which have been ranked as third and fourth. Commitment and responsibility towards the family work and management was been ranked as the fifth issue.

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Table 10. Garment workers problems related to personal life

Sl.No	Issues	Mean	SD	Garrett Score	Garrett Rank
1	Unsupportive family	3.01	1.13	49.72	III
2	Unexpected / unavoidable leaves	2.30	1.18	58.44	I
3	Family security	3.19	1.34	47.62	IV
4	Child care/ elders care/ dependent children	2.78	1.47	52.50	II
5	Commitment towards family management	3.67	1.21	41.44	V

K. Safety and security related issue:

Table 11 shows the safety and security issues faced by the working women in the garment industry. Over the job (60.17) was been ranked as first and within the organization (52.91) was been ranked second. Safety while traveling (50.26) was ranked as third and over time (47.34) was ranked as fourth. Safety from a coworker (37.81) was ranked as the fifth issue.

Table 11.Garment workers problems related to safety.

Sl.No.	Issues	Mean	SD	Garrett Score	Garrett Rank
1	Inside the company	2.74	1.29	52.91	II
2	Over job	2.13	1.27	60.17	I
3	Traveling	2.96	1.36	50.26	III
4	Over time	3.24	1.19	47.34	IV
5	Coworker/supervisors	3.95	1.24	37.81	V

V. Conclusion

Garment and apparel industries are been dominated by women workforce.Various issues and problems pertaining to the personal as well as professional life is negatively impacting these employees' health and work. The most predominant issues related to job and organization was been identified as rigid human resource policies, compensation for their job, work pressure, and sanitation. Some of the health related issues faced by the garment workers are frequent eye pain, headache, and body pains. The major discrimination was been observed in the leave granting process and sexual harassment was the major abuse and harassment related issue in the garment industry. Disrespect and lack of dignity of laborand unavoidable leaves due to family commitment were some of the personal problems faced by the individuals. The psychological disturbance was been found as the impact of stress. These issues and problems are influencing the satisfaction level of the employees. Further job satisfaction level impacts on the performance of the employees. Therefore the organizations need to work on resolving these issues and problems of the worker for improving organizational productivity.

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