

Vulnerable Migrant Young Women Workers Exploitation of Garment Companies in Tirupur District, Tamilnadu - An Analytical study

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to describe the experiences of some Young Women migrant workers who have encountered exploitation in their workplaces in garment industries in Tirupur. This study considered the various types of Young Women workers exploitations that migrant workers face in their workplaces. It equally looks at the effects of worker exploitation on migrant Young Women workers, and suggested possible ways that migrant workers could make themselves less vulnerable to workplace exploitation. The findings were divided into three parts. The first part of the finding uncovered the various kinds of exploitative practices the migrants face in their workplaces such as denial of various workers' rights. The second part showed the personal feelings of the exploited persons in response to their experiences. The third part of the finding showed the various negative effects that Young Women workers exploitation produces in the life of the exploited persons such as psychological, physiological, and emotional as well as health effects. The study was able to discover the reasons for migrant workers' vulnerability to Young Women workers exploitation and the actions that could be taken to reduce the vulnerability of migrant workers in their workplaces.

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Introduction

Though there are improvements in employment and workers' conditions on the work floor and in workers' hostels in textile mills and garment factories in the State, "major worker abuses continue to occur," according to the latest report by non-government watchdogs. The Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO) and the India Committee of the Netherlands (ICN) published a report, 'Captured by cotton', in May 2011 on the exploitation of Dalit girls in the south Indian garment industry that produces for European and U.S. markets. Almost a year later, there was a report, 'Maid in India', that states a large number of girls are employed under schemes (mostly known as Sumangali scheme) where they work for long hours, including forced overtime, under unhealthy conditions. 'Bonded Young Women workers in the south Indian garment industry an update of debate and action on the Sumangali scheme' by SOMO and ICN in July 2012 focuses on issues such as improvements in the garment industry in the State and the increasing number of migrant workers employed in the units. According to the update, the length of the contract period for workers in the textile units in Tirupur district is under discussion and in some factories it has been reduced to one year from three years. It is also found that boys and girls from other States come to

work in the garment factories and spinning mills in Tamil Nadu. During police raids in June and July, children from other parts of Tamil Nadu and from other States such as Rajasthan and Bihar, and aged below 14, were rescued from some of the spinning mills in Tirupur. The update says SOMO and ICN apply ILO Conventions 138 and 182, which imply that all children up to at least 14 years should be able to attend full-time education and hazardous workers of children aged between 14 and 18 are prohibited. An official of the Inspectorate of Factories told The Hindu that according to the Factories Act there is no prohibition on employment of adolescent workers aged between 15 and 18 in India with fitness certificate issued by the certifying surgeon of the Factories Department. Instances of employment of migrant Young Women workers, especially from the northern States, in textile units in and around Tirupur are almost nil and employment of adolescent workers is remote.

A. Aloysius, founder of Social Awareness and Voluntary Education, says the biggest recruitment now is from among those aged between 14 and 20 from other districts of Tamil Nadu and other States. They should get the minimum wages. The improvement seen in the sector is that tier-one export-oriented units have given up the Sumangali or similar schemes. They

pay wages according to norms and respect freedom of movement of the workers. The areas of concern include the need for implementation of minimum wages for apprentice workers across the textile sector, accommodation facilities for the workers should be monitored by an external committee, and there should be improvement in freedom of movement of the workers. S. Dinakaran, chairman of Southern India Mills' Association, says the facilities in many of the mills here are better than those in countries such as Bangladesh and Thailand. The government should take action against those employing children and those not complying with worker laws. At least 20 per cent of the workers in the mills now are from other States. Tirupur region is one of the country's fast growing textile and garment industry hub. 56% of India's total knitwear for export is produced in Tirupur region. There are some 7,000 registered and several unregistered garment units exist in the town, which provides employment opportunity to close to a million people both directly and indirectly. Sizeable section among workers is internal migrants from different districts of Tamilnadu and other Indian states we will. Besides adult workers, there are children below 18 years both boys and girls employed in the supply chain of the garment industry. The age group and face of internal migrant workers are becoming younger and younger over the past few years. This is the alarming trend found in this region. The industry is driving hard to employ younger generation by aggressively pursuing Hostel schemes for young girls and women and camp worker schemes (Sumangali/Mankalya/Thirumagal schemes). The rate of recruitment of young women in camp worker schemes has increased in the past one year than the previous years. Women workers continue to face excessive working hours, low wages, restriction on mobility and freedom, verbal and physical abuses, poor quality of food and water, insufficient health care and absence of better health and safety in working environment etc. After a decline in recruitment of children in the late 90's and early 2000's, the trend is now changing with the employment of a number of children in supply chain factories. The problem of Young Women workers found between migrant workers' community is not only linked with poverty but also it has established connection with educational infrastructure facilities. Slums and other residential areas of workers are in the state of poor hygiene and improper sanitary conditions. Worker exploitation is a century long problem which dated back to the time of the industrial revolution. This problem still exists in our own contemporary time and has taken different dimensions.

Worker exploitation is not a problem that is peculiar to one country or region, but it happens in

every country of the world. Anyone that is engaged in worker's activity can fall victim to worker exploitation whether working in own country or abroad. However some group of persons is seen as more vulnerable to being exploited than others. One group that is more prone to exploitation worldwide is migrant workers or persons involved in a workers' activity in countries other than their own. That does not mean that people cannot face worker exploitation in their own countries. India is one of developing countries, and a recent destination for migrants. For its economic advancement and social welfare system, Tirupur attracts some migrants from different parts of the world, who have come to work on permanent, temporary, or seasonal basis. The interest of this research study is not to point accusing fingers on some employers, or to tarnish the image of a sector of garment industries; rather the aim is to use the experiences of some Young Women migrant to find out the kinds of workers exploitations that exist in garment industries. It equally wants to find out how these malpractices take place and their negative effects on the general well being of the victims.

The aim of this research work is look into the phenomenon of the exploitation of foreign workers in Tirupur, to investigate and determine the types of workplace exploitation immigrants encounter in some of the facility service companies in the areas mentioned above, to discuss its effects on the well being of the affected immigrants, and finally to make recommendation on how immigrant persons working in Tirupur can be best protected from exploitative practices My main objective for this academic research is to lead a discussion and to shed light on this social problem, which is invisible but real and has big effects on the wellbeing of some immigrants in Tirupur. As earlier said, there have been some reports and research studies on the working conditions of immigrant in Tirupur by Finnish authors, but this research study will be one of the first done by an immigrant person. A migrant worker cannot be properly defined without referring to the connoting concepts such as migration, immigration and emigration. Historically, movement from one place to another for different reasons has been an action associated with man and animal from time immemorial. This is one of the basic survival techniques of the both species based on reason and instinct. Nevertheless, migration has been identified as part of human growth and developmental process (ILO 2004) which has both push and pulls factors. And most often the push and pulls factors of migration are related to economic reasons or quest for better life. There are other factors such as the need to avert threats to life cause by human pressure, demographic pressure and environmental degradation. There are about 214

million migrant persons around the globe which accounts for the 3.1 % of world population (UN DESA, 2008). Statistics showed that Europe has the largest number of immigrants, with a towering number of 70.6 million people in 2005. North America has over 45.1 million immigrants, followed by Asia which has 25.3 million. However, the percentage of migrants varies from country to country. In the recent times, migration has become a sensitive and controversial issue in both national and international politics. It is an issue that provokes a lot of debates, especially in the most advanced democracies. Each country, region or organization defines migration in a way that suits their interests. However, this thesis will adopt the common definitions that have gained international acceptance.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defined migration as moving into the boundary of a political or administrative unit for a certain minimum period of time. It involves the movement of refugees, displaced persons, uprooted people as well as economic migrants. Internal migration refers to a move from one area (a province, district or municipality) to another within one country. International migration is a territorial relocation of people between nation-states. Two forms of relocation can be excluded from this broad definition: First, a territorial movement which does not lead to any change in ties of social membership and therefore remains largely inconsequential both for the individual and for the society at the points of origin and destination, such as tourism; second, a relocation in which the individuals or the groups concerned are purely passive objects rather than active agents of the movement, such as organized transfer of refugees from states of origins to a safe haven (UNESCO). Even though this definition seemed to cover most aspects of migration, however, it omitted certain groups who are equally considered as migrants or immigrants in certain countries. Exploitation is a term which has social, political and economic connotations, but in this research study, it will be treated as a social phenomenon.

Tormey (2008) defined exploitation as taking undue advantage of another, or making gains on individual or group of persons without giving them what is due to them. It equally involves a situation where the exploiter gains and the exploited lose. For Goodin (1988) exploitation of persons involves ill attitudes that infringe on the ethical laws of protecting the susceptible. His definition could be seen as referring to the conditions of migrant workers who are seen as vulnerable to exploitation and abuses in their congregation countries. The former takes undue advantage of the vulnerability of the latter. However, worker exploitation can be defined as the denial of the

exclusive employment rights of migrant workers as stipulated by national workers laws and guidelines. It equally means maltreatments, physical abuse, sexual abuse and psychological torture of workers by their employers (International Workers Organization).

Dimensions of organizational level exploitation

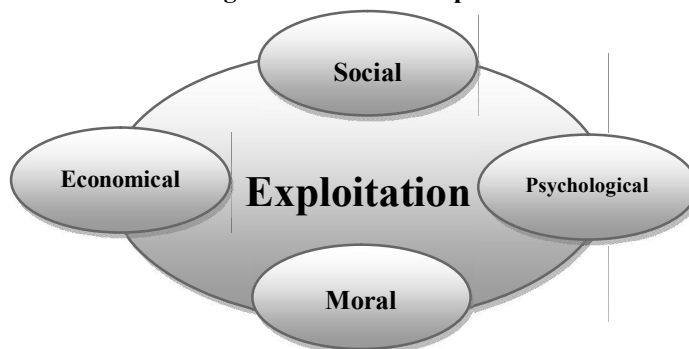


Figure 1: Shows the four dimensions of exploitation

Social dimension

Exploitation has always been seen and defined as a social occurrence that happens in human society. It is a sociological trend because it happens in the human society and in the course of man to man interaction. First and foremost, the concept of phenomenon can first be found in the philosophical works of the classical Greek philosophers, especially in the Aristotelian metaphysics which divided reality into 'noumena' (unseen) and 'phenomena' (seen). This means that phenomenon could be seen as something which can be perceived by human senses. My aim is not to go into philosophical inquiry rather, to present a rationalistic background understanding of the phenomenon as a concept. In a layman's language, the phenomenon can be understood as perceivable things which could be felt by human beings. This includes events, experiences and behaviors.

Economical dimension

The first academic work on exploitation was done in the context of economic relationship between the owners of workers (employers) and workers (employees). Since then the definition of exploitation cannot be done without reference to an economic relationship. Though my aim is neither to take sides nor to go into economic and political debate, but I wish to say that the first discussion of exploitation was an apparent attack on the capitalist economic and political ideology by the opponents. Exploitation has often been discussed as the byproduct of capitalism. The capitalists in response to the attack on their system have maintained that there is no exploitation as long as the employers make gains and equal pay to the workers what they agreed. But it is good to note here

that there is no system in the world which has not taken advantage of the vulnerable in society.

Moral dimension

The moral dimension looks at the moral justification behind exploitation. Goodin (1988) conceived exploitation of human beings as bad actions that contravene the moral norm of protecting the vulnerable this definition highlights the moral burden placed on the shoulders of the exploiters. Scanlon (2008) questions the wrongfulness of exploitation if it happens to the consent and permission of the exploited. However, the issue of human rights comes into play in the moral dimension of exploitation. Psychological dimension of exploitation entails looking at the cause and effects of exploitation from the psychological point of view. First and foremost, what influences the behaviors of the exploiters which made them to indulge in the exploitation of other people? Are they doing it for just economic gain or to boost their personal ego? What are the motives of the employers who commit violence and harassment against their employees? I believe that there are psychological reasons why some people exploit others, since exploitation can be expressed through human behaviors. Just as the actions of the pedophiles, the human traffickers, the substance abusers, and other people who indulge in other malpractices could be explained from the psychological point of view, the actions of exploitative employers could also be explained as a behavioral disorder which can equally be diagnosed through psychological means.

Factors that drive exploitation

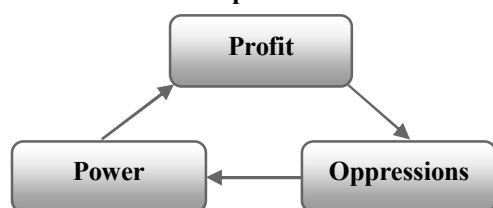


Figure 2: Shows the factors that drive exploitation

In all forms of exploitation, profit making has always been the main reason. Holmstrom (1977) conceived exploitation as necessarily involving profits of some kind to the exploiter. Profit making is identified as one of the main motivations behind the exploitation of vulnerable workers by some employers. It is also a pull and push factors for people engaged in human trafficking which is also a form of worker exploitation. When employers purposefully withhold or cut the salaries and wages of the workers, or when the employers refuse to pay for holidays, extra work allowances and other worker entitlements, the migrant workers lose some money which they are the rightful owners, while the employers make gains

by unjustly holding onto these entitlements as part of their companies' profits.

Wright (2005) described exploitation as a problem linked to dominate, a social situation where a person's life is directed and controlled by another. This means that exploitation happens when there is unequal power between the exploiter and the exploited. Wertheimer (1999) considers exploitation as a wrongful human behavior that put strain on human morality. From its origin exploitation has always been seen as an action that happens between unequal parties, where one party dictates and the other obeys.

Exploitation could be a means of perpetuating oppression of the most vulnerable. I understand oppression as a system that employs subjugation, exclusion and exploitation. Prilleltensky and Gonick (1996) defined oppression as "a condition of unequal power relations typified by domination, subordination, and resistance, in which the dominating persons or groups exert control by limiting access to material resources and by putting fear in the oppressed persons". This means that the oppressed persons have lesser power than their oppressors, and are not in control of the affairs of their lives. Oppression thrived where there are structural inequalities and where resources are scarce. Employment work contract is the regal bond or covenant between employer and employee. The highlights of this act are the decrees on the following;

1. Entering into an employment contract
2. The responsibilities of the employer and employee
3. The prohibition of discrimination
4. The determination of the minimum terms of employment
5. The employee's right to family leave
6. Laying off an employee
7. Terminating the contract of employment the liability for indemnity

Results analysis

Identify data analysis as the core of every qualitative social research, because it is a careful scientific examination of the subject matter of any research work. Defined data analysis as a technique of methodologically examining interview feedbacks, field notes and other research items gathered to help a researcher to understand them and be able to present them to others. The analysis includes working with research information, arranging them, splitting them into smaller parts, blending them, looking out for differences, noting then important lessons and making decisions what others should learn from the process. Data analysis is a very important aspect of all research studies, and a careful consideration is needed when choosing an analytic tool. I adopted a

phenomenological analytic method which helped me to break down the data. I equally did the following; bracketing and phenomenological reduction, mark out important meanings, put meanings together to form teams, recapitulating all the interviews, validating and modifying them and bring out general and individual points from the interviews. The bracketing was done by listening to all the interviews and reading the transcripts made from them, mapping out similarities

and differences in the personal experiences of each interviewee in regards to worker exploitation in their working life. Moreover, pulling the similarities and differences together helped me to understand the important themes in the exploitation of migrant workers working in facility service companies, and the pattern of occurrences of this social phenomenon. The experiences were split into parts and arranged under different themes.

Table1. Mean and Standard Deviation of Variables

Variable	Indicator	Mean	Std. Deviation
η1	Q13	5.1756	1.1107
	Q14	4.9220	1.1520
	Q15	4.4293	1.2838
	Q16	4.1598	1.2123
η 2	Q9	4.2122	1.1484
	Q10	4.0511	1.1349
	Q11	4.0880	1.1199
	Q12	4.2223	1.2949
η 3	Q5	4.5902	1.4100
	Q6	4.3822	1.3651
	Q7	4.5862	1.4030
	Q8	4.5573	1.3975
η 4	Q1	4.2488	1.4182
	Q2	4.6829	1.3939
	Q3	3.7054	1.6275
	Q4	3.6990	1.4896

Based on the above results table I will be itemized according to the themes made during the analysis of the transcribed interview data. The findings were divided into three parts namely practical experiences, feelings and effects. The first part is divided into themes according to the exploitations that migrant interviews experienced in their workplaces. The second part explains the impression that the interviewees had about their employment condition. The third part details different types of negative effects that the interviewees had encountered because of the abuse and exploitation they encountered in their

workplaces. The practical experiences mean some of the exploitative experiences that the interviewees encountered in their workplaces. These include certain abnormal behaviors from employers which goes contrary to employment best practices as contained in the worker laws and the employment acts. A working contract is an oral or written covenant between an employer and employee, which specify the provisions and conditions, under which a prospective employee agrees to perform certain work duties given by an employer in return for a mutually agreed remuneration.

Table 2: Cronbach α Value for Internal Consistency

Variable	Indicator	Cronbach α
η 4	Q1-Q4	0.8683
η 3	Q5-Q8	0.8811
η 2	Q9-Q12	0.8872
η 1	Q13-Q16	0.8745
Cronbach α Value: 0.9140		

Table 3: Factor loadings of all indicators on respective latent variable

Relationship		Coefficient	Std. estimated Value	t	Measuring error
η 1	Q13	λ (X) 13,1	0.79	----	0.38
η 1	Q14	λ (X) 14,1	0.87	13.47	0.25
η 1	Q15	λ (X) 15,1	0.85	13.23	0.27
η 1	Q16	λ (X) 16,1	0.80	12.25	0.36
η 2	Q9	λ (Y) 9,2	0.81	----	0.35
η 2	Q10	λ (Y) 10,2	0.89	12.69	0.22
η 2	Q11	λ (Y) 11,2	0.89	14.85	0.21
η 2	Q12	λ (Y) 12,2	0.79	12.69	0.37
η 3	Q5	λ (Y) 13,3	0.87	----	0.24
η 3	Q6	λ (Y) 6,3	0.94	19.61	0.12
η 3	Q7	λ (Y) 7,3	0.90	18.22	0.19
η 3	Q8	λ (Y) 8,3	0.62	10.04	0.61
η 4	Q1	λ (Y) 1,4	0.76	----	0.42
η 4	Q2	λ (Y) 2,4	0.77	11.38	0.41
η 4	Q3	λ (Y) 3,4	0.91	13.17	0.18
η 4	Q4	λ (Y) 4,4	0.80	11.69	0.36
Relationship		Coefficient	Std. estimated Value	t	
η 1	η 2	β 2,1	0.55	7.29	
η 1	η 3	β 3,1	0.49	6.50	
η 1	η 4	β 4,1	0.25	2.48	
η 2	η 3	β 3,2	0.31	4.28	
η 2	η 4	β 4,2	0.29	3.13	
η 3	η 4	β 4,3	0.07	0.58	
Model fit index		$\chi^2 = 296.02; df = 98; \chi^2/df < 5; RMSEA = 0.100; SRMR = 0.055; NFI = 0.94; NNFI = 0.95; IFI = 0.96; RFI = 0.93; CFI = 0.96.$			

Based on the above data analysis the contract agreement contains the employee's duties together with his rights and privileges, and at the same time it specifies the obligations of the employer towards the employees. In Tirupur a working contract which is often in written form is a binding agreement between employer and employee which confirm them as reliable contract parties. The garments employment act states that the following information must be included as the terms of employment in a contract namely, the date of commencement of the work, the duration of the employment contract and the justification for a fixed term employment relationship, the trial period, the place where the work is to be performed, the employee's principle duties, the grounds for the determination of pay or other remuneration, and the pay period, the regular working hours, the manner of determining annual holiday and the period of notice, and the collective agreement applicable to the work. The working contract in Tirupur is a legal document which is drawn in accordance with the collective bargaining. It protects both the employer and employee from unwarranted behaviors from each the contractual party. The winding up is that presenting a

substandard working contract or not giving a working contract at all could be considered as the breach of migrant workers' rights. Furthermore, not having a normal working contract as stipulated in the employment act and as agreed in the collective agreement makes it easier for an employee to lose his employment rights and privileges, since most of the workers' privileges depend on the status of their employment contracts. For instance, things such as the length of the trial period, salary increase, the number of days for annual holidays and job security, are all depend on the nature of the contract agreement between the employer and employee. When an employer intentionally refuses to follow the stipulations as contain in workers and collective agreement in the case of migrant worker, that the employer is taking undue advantaged of the migrant worker involve. Finally, without an employment contract, a worker may not be in an advantageous position to take legal action against an unjust employer.

Conclusion

Beginning of this study that exploitation of migrant Young Women workers in Tirupur is an invisible phenomenon which affects the victims adversely internally and externally. I have been able to demonstrate that this social phenomenon is real through the experiences of the migrants who work in the garment companies. Being an immigrant myself who have encountered workers exploitation in the past, I believe that migrant workers should not wait for the authorities to come and discover their problems; rather they should tell their problems with their own mouth in their own words. This research has fulfilled its aim by providing a platform for the voiceless migrant workers to voice out their experiences in cleaning companies. Another achievement of this research work is that it has opened an opportunity for organizations that are interested in immigrating work to extend their services to these exploited workers who are passing through psychological, physiological and social crises due to the traumatic encounters they made while working for abusive, exploitative and manipulative employers. Finally, I believe that this research work will encourage other researchers do further investigation into working conditions of migrant workers in other sectors such as construction sector, agricultural sector, domestic work sector, and other unskilled workers sectors where migrant might be exposed to abuse and exploitation. It is my conviction that this research study will go a long way to expose the problem of exploitation as experienced by migrants. Finally, I wish to state here that it is not all migrants working in service sectors that are being exploited, and not all the employers of migrant workers in garment companies take advantage of their foreign employers.

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