

Empowerment of Women Workers in Garment Units: An Empirical Analysis

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Abstract

Sustainable development gives an idea and direction to the person, organization, government, and society as a whole to the development of all sectors and leading life without compromising future needs. Hence to achieve economic growth and sustainable development consideration and management of human resources and natural resources are crucial. The present study tried to evaluate the opportunities in garment units and their impact on women workers and the standard of living of the family members of women workers. Here the structured questionnaire and observation methods are used to collect the primary data from the respondents. The sample size of the study is 50 and the samples are selected through a random sampling technique. The collected data sets from the respondents are analysed with the help of cross-tabulation and percentages using the modern tool of SPSS version 20 software. Most of the women workers agreed that their family environment changed due to working in garment units in terms of reducing physical and mental exploitation as well as consideration of female as an asset from the burden. So it shows that garment units contribution to changing family environment of the workers is high. This study has given brief information on women empowerment through garment units and offered suggestions to achieve self-reliance among women.

Keywords: Women workers, garment units and empowerment.

Introduction

The clothing industry or garment industry summarizes the types of trade and industry along the production and value chain of clothing and garments. At present, women are working in the garments sector, education sector, banking sector, different NGOs, and government organizations. According to statistics from India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF), August 2021 report, India is the world's second-largest producer of textiles and garments. The textiles and apparel industry contributes 2.3% to the country's GDP, 13% to industrial production, and 12% to exports. The textile industry has around 45 million workers employed in the textiles sector, including 3.5 million handloom workers. These women have neither decision-making power nor access to resources before getting a job in the garment sector. The job creates ample opportunity for female workers by giving them economic freedom and keeping them near the resources.

Women Empowerment

It refers to the creation of an environment for women where they can make decisions of their own for their personal benefit as well as for society. Women Empowerment refers to increasing and improving the social, economic, political, and legal strength of women, to ensure equal rights for women to make them confident enough to claim and enjoy their rights, to control and benefit from resources, assets, income, and their own time, as well as the ability to manage risk and improve their economic status and well-being. There is no denying the fact that without women's empowerment development goals of India are always unreachable. This country belongs to a social system where women consider a burden to the family. However, present the condition is changing. Nowadays, women are working in the garments sector, education sector, banking sector, different NGOs, and government organizations.

Indicators of Women Empowerment

Women empowerment can be best defined and analysed by evaluating the various empowerment indicators. The indicators were classified and studied as qualitative and quantitative.

Qualitative	Quantitative
Self-esteem, individual and collective confidence.	Demographic trends related with fertility rate, maternal mortality rate, and sex ratio, average age of marriage and life expectancy of women.
Knowledge about one's health comprising of reproductive roles.	Status of income levels.
Negotiating power at home and in community.	Access and control over assets.

Review of Literature

Archana, V. (2020) in her article "Impact of Ready Made Garment Industry on Empowerment of Women" explained that with more than 45 million workers, the Indian textile industry, which is commonly used to create apparel, is the second-largest producer in India. Economic empowerment for women is about the ability of women to choose whether to work, how much to work and how to spend or save their incomes. Companies that strive to avoid negative impacts, while promoting opportunities to increase the empowerment potential of apparel sector jobs, will bring the most significant benefits to women workers. Therefore, more garment factories must be set up in accordance with the current regulations and rules, and buyers must demand and create more jobs for women workers in order to increase women's empowerment. The opinions of the respondents are tabulated and the SPSS version 25 software is used for the analysis of the impact of RMG on the empowerment of the women who are working in this industry. In general, the financial contribution of women to the family is decisive in empowering women because their ability to communicate and understand the situation helps them to take part in decision-making in the household and access resources that also have a great deal of effect on their capacity building.

Hemamalini, D.K. (2017) in Health & Safety issues and Harassment at workplace in selected Garment Industries of Bengaluru City. This study is an attempt to assess the health & safety issues and psychological harassment of workers in the Garment Industry of Bangalore City. Results revealed that all the facilities related to health and safety were addressed 100% including no restriction on to use of bathroom facilities. Most of the crèche and canteen facilities were maintained except for restrictions on workers to leave their child in the crèche (79.1%). It is evident that health and safety measures are still to be improved in garment factories and harassment needs to be reduced. Strategies for improving the quality of life of garment workers and reducing harassment in the workplace have been delineated.

Research Gaps

It was found from the review of literature that some of the studies relating to women empowerment have been done at international level but a few studies relating to empowerment of women have been found at national, Karnataka level and district level. This has necessitated to fill the research gap on the role of garment industries on empowerment of women at Bengaluru level.

The majority of the theoretical and experiential research in the context of empowerment of women in the Karnataka have been conducted in a précised manner about their involvement in the production process and participation in industrial development. Issues such as the significance of feminine-intensive industries in industrialization, women empowerment need to be formed the topic of serious research.

The present study will focus on various aspects of women pertaining to economic participation, decision making, financial contribution to household and purchasing power. An attempt has been made to throw light upon the prospects of women empowerment so that this will help to fill the research gap.

Objectives of the Study

1. To evaluate the opportunities in garment units and their impact on women workers.
2. To study the change in the standard of living of the family members of women workers.
3. To suggest suitable measures to empower women employees in garment industries.

Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses have been framed in the present study;

- 5.1. H1: There is a relationship between the monthly salary in the garment units and socio-economic changes of women workers.
- 5.2. H1: There is a relationship between the health & accidental insurance in garment units and the benefits gained by garment jobs of women workers.

Methodology of the Study

Primary Data

The primary data gives clear information on the women empowerment. The present study has been done by collecting information from the 50 respondents directly with the structured questionnaire and observation method. The questions included like various opportunities and facilities provided by the garment units and their impact on women empowerment. The primary data is collected through a simple random technique.

Secondary Data

The secondary data on women empowerment and literature reviews are gathered from various sources such as google scholar, semantic scholar, journals, etc. These sources gave conceptual clarity on women empowerment.

Analysis of the Data

The data analysis is based on the opinion collected by the 50 women workers from three garment units in Bengaluru Urban. This analysis is made with the help of tables.

1. Age & Educational qualification of women workers:

The below table 1 gives information on women workers age & educational qualification.

Age		Educational Qualification				Total
		Below SSLC	SSLC	PUC	Higher Studies	
1	Count	1	5	4	3	13 (26%)
2	Count	2	7	5	0	14 (28%)
3	Count	16	5	2	0	23 (46%)
	Count	19	17	11	3	50
Total	% within Age	38%	34%	22%	6%	100%

Source: Primary Data.

Note: Age classification in the table 1 is -1: Below Age 25, 2: Between Age 26 to 34, 3: Above Age 34.

Table 1 gives information on age wise educational classification of women workers in selected garment units. As per the information in the table above 34 age workers are higher in garment units so what it indicates is the married, separated or divorced and widowed workers are more due to financial problems in their family as well as below SSLC and SSLC qualified workers are more than higher studies or degree qualified workers. That means garment work is skill based than educational qualification. Hence to improve the skills of the workers the garment units should provide on the job training and off the job training so that it will enhance their productive capacity.

Educational Qualification & Monthly Salary of Women Workers

Table 2 gives information on educational qualification and monthly salary of women workers. It shows that in the garment units more or less all are getting a similar salary which means around 75% of workers are getting a salary between rupees 8000/- to 11,500/-. Hence to increase salary in garment units based on workers skills & education the government should give skill based and job based education rather than providing old traditional education of 10+2+3 (SSLC, PUC, and Degree).

Educational Qualification		Monthly Salary								
		8000	9000	10000	11000	11500	12000	13000	14000	Total
Below SSLC	Count	6	3	3	6	0	0	1	0	19 (38%)
SSLC	Count	0	4	4	4	1	3	1	0	17 (34%)
PUC	Count	0	3	1	1	0	5	1	0	11 (22%)
Higher Studies	Count	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	3 (06%)
Total	Count	6	10	8	12	1	9	3	1	50
	%	12%	20%	16%	24%	2%	18%	6%	2%	100%

Source: Primary Data.

Usage Classification of Monthly Income of Women Workers

Table 3 gives information on usage classification of monthly income of women workers.

Monthly Salary		Usage classification of monthly income of women workers				Total
		Children's Education	Economic self reliance	Increasing savings	Improvement in the health condition	
8000	Count	4	0	1	1	6 (12%)
9000	Count	2	7	0	1	10 (20%)
10000	Count	1	4	0	3	8 (16%)
11000	Count	8	1	1	2	12 (24%)

11500	Count	0	0	1	0	1 (02%)
12000	Count	4	4	0	1	9 (18%)
13000	Count	0	1	1	1	3 (06%)
14000	Count	0	1	0	0	1 (02%)
Total	Count	19	18	4	9	50
	%	38.0%	36.0%	8.0%	18.0%	100.0%

Source: Primary Data.

Table 3 indicates that most of the women workers use their salary to educate their children in the family because nowadays giving education to children is very costly. Even the common people also not ready to send their children to government schools, and colleges due to the lack of infrastructure and less quality of teaching. It made it compulsory to work both men and women in the family to lead the family maintenance, to educate their children, to become self reliance, to increase savings, and to enhance the health condition of the family. The garment units should take initiative to adopt educational institutions and hospitals to provide better and free education and health facilities to their workers children so that it will help the women workers to use their earned income for the betterment of their living standard.

Changes in the Family Environment

The below table gives information on changes in the family environment of women workers.

Garment units are helpful in changing the family environment		Changes in family environment				
		Reduced Physical and Mental Exploitation	Reduced Control by Husband or Parent and others	Considiration of Female as an asset from Burden	All the above	Total
Strongly Disagree	Count	2	0	1	0	3 (04%)
Disagree	Count	6	4	0	1	11 (22%)
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	2	1	4	3	10 (20%)
Agree	Count	4	2	9	4	19 (38%)
Strongly Agree	Count	3	1	3	0	7 (14%)
Total	Count	17	8	17	8	50
	%	34.0%	16.0%	34.0%	16.0%	100.0%

Source: Primary Data.

Table 4 shows that there is a positive relationship between garment facilities and women workers family environment. Most of the workers agreed that their family environment changed due to working in garment units in terms of reducing physical and mental exploitation as well as consideration of female as an asset from the burden. So it shows that garment units contribution in changing the family environment of the workers is high. Therefore the central and state governments should implement good policies to increase best facilities in garment units in Karnataka as well as in India.

Hypotheses Test

Hypothesis 1

H1: There is a relationship between the monthly salary in the garment units and socio-economic changes of women workers.			Monthly Salary	Socio economic changes
Pearson Correlation	Monthly Salary	Correlation Coefficient	1	-.351*
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.012
	Socio economic changes	Correlation Coefficient	-.351*	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.012	

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Primary Data.

Table 1 of the hypothesis shows that Pearson's correlation of monthly salary and socio economic changes of women workers are found to be very low negative and statistically significant

($r = -.351$, $p < 0.012$). Hence H1 is supported. To overcome from the very low negative to high positive correlation between monthly salary and socio economic changes of women workers the government should provide basic facilities to the garment units so that their cost of production will come down and it can help the garment units to increase the salary of the workers.

Hypothesis 2

B) H1: There is a relationship between the health & accidental insurance in garment units and the benefits gained by garment jobs of women workers.		Garment unit provides health & accidental insurance	1) Economic freedom 2) Awareness about women rights 3) Self reliance 4) All the above
Garment unit provides health & accidental insurance	Pearson Correlation	1	.141
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.329
1) Economic freedom 2) Awareness about women rights 3) Self reliance 4) All the above	Pearson Correlation	.141	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.329	

Source: Primary Data.

Table 2 of the hypothesis shows Pearson's correlation of health & accidental insurance of garment units and the benefits gained by garment jobs of women workers are found to be very low positive but statistically not significant ($r = .141$, $p < .329$). Hence H1 is rejected.

Suggestions

To enhance women empowerment in the garment units the below steps should be taken by the management so that it will help the women workers:

- It should Increase the wages of the workers for better living.

- The management should provide interest free loans and advances.
- It should give guidance to have saving schemes.
- The compensation structure in the garment units should be good.
- The garment units should extend its health and accidental insurance.

On the other hand women workers should have awareness and adopt the below concepts in their life:

- Women workers should increase their self confidence.
- They need to adopt the characteristics of self initiative and self reliance.
- Ability to take self decisions should adopt.
- Playing a main role in the family issues so that it will help them to participate in the problem solving techniques.

Conclusion

The empowerment of women is a multidimensional concept. Hence the Government, NGOs, SHGs, Cooperative societies, Public and Private sectors, and society altogether should work to empower women. The present study focused on the contributions of garment units to the empowerment of women. This study gave information on how the salary, compensation structure, health and saving policies, transportation facilities and insurance policies, etc. affect women workers & their families. The garment units to improve the skills in the workers should provide on the job training and off the job training so that it will enhance their productive capacity. It should take initiative to adopt educational institutions and hospitals to provide better and free education and health facilities to their workers children so that it will helpful to the women workers to use their earned income for the betterment of their living standard. This study found that there is a positive relationship between garment facilities and women workers family environment. Therefore the government should implement good policies to increase better facilities in garment units.

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