



**ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER**

**Commerce**

**WOMEN WORKERS IN TEXTILE MILLS AND THEIR PROBLEMS**

**KEY WORDS:**

**M. Jannathul Firdouse**

Assistnt Professor of Commerce Parvathy's Arts and Science College Dindigul

**Dr. K. Neelamegam**

Head Department of Commerce Governemnt Arts Colelge Veppanthattai, Perambalur

**INTRODUCTION**

Women and especially working women, strive to earn their bread and butter for themselves and for their families. People outside start them in a way as to some animal from zoo has escaped in a society and an awkward scene takes place. Every one gazing at them, passing teasing remarks and even following them to their destinies, making their lives even more harder and these poor creatures feel it difficult to survive among the inconsiderate male members of the society. Working women have to carry the extra load of work physically and psychologically. In spite of all hindrance, woman is fully aware of the situational demand for work and she is motivated to work for the improvement of herself, her family and ultimately her country.

**WOMEN WORKERS IN TEXTILE MILLS**

The competition in global market led to flexibility and feminization of labor in textile industry of Tamil Nadu. The massive growth in garment exports has coincided with absorption of female labor in the industry in large numbers since 1985. Textile mills saw a large number of women joining the mills in the last ten years and female employment in the mills now stand around 70%. This labor force however, faces number of problems during or after the course of their employment. Participation by women in the labour force has been increasing steadily.

**PREFERENCE FOR FEMALE WORKERS**

There appears to be an ironic preference to hire female workers at these textile factories. In this labor-intensive industry, cost plays a significant role in manufacturing. Producers and manufacturers are in search of cheap labor. Female labor is cheaper than male labor. The female workers are also considered docile and more loyal than their male counter parts. Employers also think that with girls it is easier to maintain discipline.

**PARENTAL PREFERENCE**

Parents often prefer their girls working at these factories because they provide their daughters with security. The female workers often live at hostels and factory management assures parents that the young women will be chaperoned at all times. Poor families take comfort in the thoughts that by sending their daughter to the factory, she would be safe, well fed and taken care of. In fact they would get money in return. Parents also send their children away at these factories sometimes to quell their rebellious

**PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN WORKERS**

A working woman faces problems related to her job. Though she has entered various jobs and professions, she is not yet regarded as a sincere professional worker. This sometimes hurts her ego. If she is working under a male boss, she is often taken as a woman first, and worker later. Her politeness and courtesy may be misunderstood. If she is too reserved, she is labeled as haughty and vain and having a superiority complex. When working with male colleagues, if she is friendly, she is labeled as a Hint. On the other hand, if she keeps herself aloof, she is labeled as a "Snob" and may be isolated. So, it is a continuous tightrope walk for her. Also her husband's suspicious attitude creates tension in her conjugal life.

Further, the efficiency of a working woman is always suspected. The Co-workers in the office cannot mentally accept the

superiority of a woman's work. Her subordinate males do not like her authority over them. Another problem for women employees is the limited number of jobs available. Growth opportunities and freedom of choice of occupation are not available to Indian women. Sex specific job differentiations exist as value. With the result that women are denied entry into many occupations. As a result the number of women employed in the professional and technical lines remains low.

A further problem faced by married working women is the problem of separation from their husbands and families due to transfer to different places. Related to this it is the problem of finding reliable and respectable housing and accommodation for women employees. Another problem of the working woman is that her children feel neglected. They miss their mother's love and attention. Sometimes the mother may try to compensate for this by bringing toys and sweets for them. Children often exploit the mother for these. Also elder children may form bad habits like smoking, drinking or even get addicted to drugs. The children's personality gets distorted.

Working women are also often sexually exploited and taken advantage of by their male bosses. This is often done by placing the "Carrot" as promotion or increments before them. Also women, by and large, being more sincere than men, are often assigned comparatively more work to do. The results in over loading and they feel exhausted.

Women are often regarded as "temporary" employees and are not taken seriously by their employers. This is especially true of unmarried women who often leave the job in the event of their marriage, and treat their job as a "Stop-gap" arrangement to pass their time before marriage. All this makes the employers prefer women employees.

In case of contract labour, the employers often avoid payment of maternity benefit and other facilities by not entering the name of women employees in the register. Also they are often threatened with dismissal (or) non-payment of wages if they don't report for work soon after child birth.

Women often work 12 hours per day on a regular basis that is one and a half shift. During the peak season, they sometimes also work for two shifts (6 hours) or three shifts (24 hours) in a row. They often have to work on Sundays during busy seasons. These workers sometimes do not receive any overtime payment. Hostel workers are subjected to excessive and forced overtime. Workers have also reported that they are woken up in the middle of the night to complete urgent orders.

Headaches, stomachaches, sleeplessness, and tiredness are common among these female workers. The factories often have bad ventilation systems that cause workers' space to be full of small particles of cotton dust. The work places are sometimes hot and humid. Some factories do not even provide protective equipment like masks to save workers from the cotton dust. Some workers underwent surgery to remove balls of cotton fiber in their bowels. Female workers in the spinning area also work on roller skates throughout the day, without wearing any protective gear.

Women workers have also reported about losing weight, irregular menstrual periods, and heavy menstrual pain. There are no proper medical facilities available at the factories. There have been cases of deaths where workers died due to respiratory

### CONCLUSION

Women workers are lured by false promises and money at young age. They are usually underpaid without any contract. The lump sum amount binds them to the job and has taken the form of bonded labor. They have limited right to freedom of movement and face occupational hazards and dangers. The need of labor and competition has led employers to introduce schemes that focus on attracting women at a young age. Their poverty, caste and socio economic status makes them vulnerable to exploitation.

Majority of the women workers felt that their job was not secure. The government and the mill owners can arrange orientation training programmes to the women workers and the training curriculum should include the various provisions / advantages meant for the women workers, their rights, safety measures, gender sensitive issues to avoid gender discrimination as well as sexual harassment. The mills should take appropriate steps to provide all the minimum basic facilities to the women workers and this will motivate the women workers to work hard.

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