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A CASE STUDY OF SHAHI GARMENTS IN SHIMOGA
DISTRICT

DR. ASHWINI. H. BIDARALLI, DR. SHEKARA

ಯಕ್ಷಗಾನದ ಮೇಲೆ ಸಿನೆಮಾ ಮಾಧ್ಯಮದ ಪ್ರಭಾವ: ಒಂದು ಅಧ್ಯಯನ

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Status of women workers in garment industry: A case study of Shahi Garments in Shimoga district

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***Abstract :** The garment sector has been making an incredible contribution to the Indian economy and the lion's share of the contribution has come from the poor female garments workers who were basically migrated from rural areas. Due to participation in this income generating sector in the urban areas, their decision making power, life and status in the society relatively got upgraded to some extent. However, the condition of female garment workers still leaves a lot to be desired. Although their level of income have relatively increased higher than before, they are finding it difficult to survive due to the increased cost of living in the urban areas. This case study attempts to find out the working conditions, safety measures, financial rewards, and level of work satisfaction of women workers working in Shahi Garments, located in Sagara, a suburb township in Shimoga district.*

Key Words: Garment sector, Decision making power, Financial crisis, Women workers, Garment industry.

Introduction

Garment industry has played an important role in women empowerment in Indian society. The Indian textile industry is the second largest in the world's economy, next only to

china. Indian textiles also account for 38 percent of the country's total exports and are therefore, a very important industry. To sustain this growth, it is imperative that the textiles industry produces goods of high quality at reasonable cost. This means that the industry must continuously moderate its machinery.

Readymade garment industry has occupied a unique place in the industrial scenario of our country by generating substantial export earnings and creating lot of employment. Its contribution to industrial production, employment and export earnings are very significant. This industry provides one of the basic necessities of life. The employment provided by it is a source of livelihood for millions of people. It also provides maximum employment with minimum capital investment. Since this industry is highly labor-intensive, it is ideally suited to Indian condition.

The Readymade garments industry is increasing day by day due to changes of fashion in day to day life. The readymade garment industry in India owes its existence to the emergence of a highly profitable market for exports. Ready-made garments account for approximately 45% of India's total textile exports. They represent value added and less import sub sector. In the recent years, however, the domestic demand has also been growing rapidly. The changes in the life style since the onset of the liberalization era, and given the base of the industry for the overseas market, Indian garments industry have taken big strides. The entry of the Indian and global fashion designers has stimulated the market further. With the rising tailoring costs and relatively low garments of standardized products, the Indian consumer is increasingly taking to ready-mades. In the past, the readymade market was confined mainly to baby dresses, shirts and dress shirts. Now it has extended to trousers, suits, and ladies' dresses and, of course, fashion garments for men and women. Ready-mades of specific brands have become not only a status symbol; these have brought a more contemporary style in offices as much as in social circles. Franchised boutiques have been established as tools for brand and image building.

Given the huge market share and the ever growing demand for readymade garments, most of the big players like Aditya Birla Group, Tata Group, Reliance, among others have ventured into apparels business in big way. Some of them have their own manufacturing units,

while others outsource it to local garment factories. It is in these garment industry that women workers are employed. Although garment industry provide employment to skilled women workers, the salary package they offer is very meager when compared to the kind of stressful work these women workers carry out in long working hours. Despite spending a large chunk of their man day in the factory delivering skillful work, their financial condition remains pathetic. Keeping this in mind, this article attempts to find out the status of women workers in garment industry, taking the case of Shahi Garments, based in Sagar, situated around 60 Kilo Meters away from the district headquarters Shimoga.

Statement of the problem

The textiles industry sector has an integral role to play in the growth of India's export industry. The textile garments are becoming increasingly competitive worldwide as more and more developing countries entering the global textile trade. To maintain if not to increase, its global market share, the Indian textile industry must procure modern, low-cost, textile machinery so that it can produce high quality textiles and garments for export at competitive garment. One of the strategies adopted by many industries is to set up their factories in areas where labor force is readily available but at a low cost. This article tries to analyze whether Shahi Garments has done the same and in the process taking undue advantage of skilled workers by underpaying them. It is in this context that "Status of Women workers in Shahi Garments" is selected as problem for the current study.

Objective of the study

- To study the socio economic conditions of women workers in garment industry.
- To examine the administrative set up of Shahi garment.
- To study the status of women workers in garment industry
- To study the working pattern of garment industry.

Method

The primary data was gathered using semi structured interview method, followed by structured questionnaire from the respondents and the secondary data was collected from journals, magazines, newspapers and websites, which have been enumerated in the reference section at the end.

Sampling procedure: There are 2500 members working in that garment. The ratio of male and female stands at 75:25. The sample size is 100 respondents, which amounts 4% of the sampling universe, a good proportion for such a study. However, the sampling size of this study has a 70:30 female and male ratio. A sampling frame of the workers for both male and female were prepared separately and respondents were selected by using simple random sampling method, starting at a random point and then selections were made with the interval of 5 until the 70 female respondents were selected. Similar method was used for selection of male respondents.

About Shahi Garments

SHAHI Garments is a reputed organization in Shimoga district, known for its quality products and services. It was established in the year 2014. They are manufacturers of dresses with quality. They have a dedicated supply at all India level. Their brand name is also well established in Karnataka. They are continuously striving to achieve better performance and improved quality to sustain their brand name. Their mantra “Every Woman’s Desire” signifies the support they have received throughout these years from their valued customers. Their motto of maintaining constant customer relationship has given an opportunity to understand and serve customers as well as markets. However, the salary package given by the company to their workers is very meager. Each worker is paid Rs. 7200 per month excluding provident fund.

Analysis and interpretation

Sampling profile: Out of 100 respondents, 70 respondents (70%) of them are female and 30 respondents (30%) of them are male respondents. Out of 100 respondents, 40 respondents (40%) belongs to the age group of 35-40 years, 32 respondents (32%) belongs to the age group of 20-35 years, whereas 16 respondents (16%) of them belongs to the age of below 20 years and only 12 respondents (12%) of them belongs to the age group of above 50 years.

Educational qualification: As far as educational qualification is concerned, out of 50 respondents, 44 respondents (44%) are graduates, interestingly, 24 respondents (24%) are postgraduates, this clearly reflect the nature of unemployment prevalent among post graduates. Otherwise they would never have took up a job as a worker in a garments factory. 10 respondents (20%) are having the educational qualification of PUC\ITI\Diploma\D.Ed, and

only 12 respondents i.e. (12%) were having an educational qualification of below SSLC.

Annual income: Out of 100 respondents, 32 respondents (32%) belong to the income group of Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 3 lakhs, 30 respondents (30%) are in the income group of Rs. 3 lakhs to Rs. 5 lakhs, 28 respondents (28%) are in the bracket of Above Rs. 5 lakhs and only 10 respondents (10%) have the annual income of less than Rs. 1 lakh.

Micro credit: Among the 100 respondents, 30 respondents (30%) have taken personal loan from private sources, 22 respondents (22%) have taken loans from national banks, 20 respondents (20%) have taken auto loans from cooperative societies and only 16 respondents (16%) have availed loans from regional rural banks.

Respondents' opinion about Shahi Garments: One of the interesting findings of the study is, despite getting lower wages, the respondents have a favorable opinion about Shahi Garments. The average monthly salary given to the workers stands at around Rs. 7200, which roughly comes to Rs. 240, lower than daily wages given under MNREGA (Mahathma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act), which now stands at Rs. 275 in Karnataka. Among the 100 respondents, 80 respondents (80%) opine that their employers are really helpful to women. 20 respondents (20%) think otherwise.

TABLE 1.1: Reasons for joining the garment industry

Sl. No.	Reasons	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Financial problem.	40	40%
2.	For self growth	24	24%
3.	To learn the skills	20	20%
4.	To improve the skills	16	16%
	Total	100	100%

Table 1.1 makes it clear that out of total respondents, 40% of said that they took up the job purely for financial problem. 24% of the respondents have taken up the job for self growth.

20% of the respondents have joined the industry to learn the new skills and 16% to improve their skills. This makes an interesting reading. It is expected of the female workers to join the garment industry purely due to financial crisis. The table also indicates towards that. However the combined percentage of other reasons given by the workers tells a different story altogether. 36% of the respondents have joined the industry to either learn or improve their skills, which indicates their desire towards upward mobility in terms of career if not anything else.

TABLE 1.2: Respondents' preferences regarding working hours

Sl. No.	Particulars	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Short term (6 hours a day)	12	12%
2.	Medium term (9 hours a day)	48	48%
3.	Long term (9-12 hours a day)	40	40%
	Total	100	100%

Table 1.2 shows the preferences of the respondents with regard to duration of work. The data explains 48% of the respondents prefer medium term work i.e., 9 hours, which is a new working hours prescribed in the labour law. 40% of the respondents prefer long working hours, which is understandable. If the workers put in extra hours in the factory, it will be considered as overtime and they will receive additional payments for the same. Only 12% of the respondents prefer short term work.

TABLE 1.3: Work related issues treated as problems by the workers

Sl. No	Issues	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Working hour	12	12%
2.	Stress	50	50%
3.	Work target	22	22%
4.	Wages	16	16%
	Total	100	100%

The table 1.3 shows that 50% of the respondents have problem with the working hour in the factory, 22% of the respondents have said that they have stress related to the work, and 16% of

them have problems in meeting the work target and interestingly only 12% of the respondents have problem of wages. Given the location of the factory, where such job opportunities are rare to come by, the employees appear to be satisfied with the wages they are getting. Although comparatively, the wages are very low, only few of the respondents have issues with it. As most of the respondents, may have agricultural assets for their basic needs of livelihood, the wages paid by the garment factory, may have been sufficient for the workers. This clearly indicates the favorableness or prudence of setting up such industries in second or third tier cities and suburbs of Karnataka, where semi skilled labor is available and at a much lower cost, which is a win-win situation both for the employers and the employed.

TABLE 1.4: Work Satisfaction

Sl. No.	Opinion	No. of members	Percentage
1.	Highly satisfied	52	52%
2.	Satisfied	11	11%
3.	Neutral	21	21%
4.	Unsatisfied	10	10%
5.	Highly unsatisfied	06	6%
	Total	100	100%

Table 1.4 reveal that out of 100 respondents chosen for the study, 52% are highly satisfied with their work in Shahi Garments, 11% of the respondents say that they are satisfied with their work. This makes an interesting reading. It means that 63% of the respondents are satisfied with their work in the factory. 21% of the respondents are neutral about the query and only a combined 16% of the respondents are unsatisfied with the work. A satisfaction level of above 60% reflects good on Shahi Garments work environment and payment method. While questioned respondents answered in the affirmative about the same.

Although the female workers in the factory appears to be satisfied with their work, during the field work the actual conditions revealed otherwise. This does throw a question mark over some of the responses given by the female workers. It is rather understandable given the fact that they agreed to be part of the study with the permission of the administrators of the factory.

This is one of the limitations of the study. Based on observation, the following findings are listed out:

- Women workers are paid low wages in SHAHI garments, which is below par government prescribed daily wages.
- There is lack quality material available for production of quality apparels.
- Single production approach (job production) is still in practice while garment industries are using batch or flow production approach.
- There is no government backed seed money available for the women workers in case of financial or health distress.
- Continuous use of traditional methods appears to be hazardous for women workers.
- The women workers are under the risk of catching infection due to chemical emissions in the factory as standard safety measures are not in place.
- Although the women workers claim to be satisfied, the problems of low wages, and long working hours does exist, despite their denial.

CONCLUSION

The garment sector has been making an incredible contribution to the Indian economy and the lion's share of the contribution has come from the poor female garments workers who were basically migrated from rural areas. Due to participation in this income generating sector in the urban areas, their decision making power, life and status in the society relatively got upgraded to some extent. However, largely, the condition of female garment workers still leaves a lot to be desired. Although their level of income have increased relatively higher than before, they are finding it difficult to survive due to the increased cost of living in the urban areas. To meet-up the financial necessities, they are looking for micro credits from informal sources and formal microfinance institutions. Therefore, flexible savings and credit services for the garment workers, if made available at factory premises, could be of immense benefit. Moreover, if garment owners allow the operations of microfinance programmes for its staff and workers from the office, it could drastically reduce overhead cost of financial transactions of the garments workers.

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