

Opinion On The Working Environment and Problems Faced By the Women Workers In Hosiery Units At Tiruppur, Tamil Nadu- An Empirical Investigation

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INTRODUCTION

Tiruppur is a textile town in Coimbatore District of Tamil Nadu and is popularly known as Banian City, Knit City and Dollar city. Tiruppur is the "Knitwear capital" of India. Tiruppur contributes to a huge amount of foreign exchange in India. It has spurred up the textile industry in India for the past three decades. Its economic boom boosts the morale of Indian industrialists.

The role of women has been changing substantially over the last decade and a half, both inside and outside homes. In addition to their role within households, they are now having a larger role in the outside world also, especially in the labour market. It has often been argued that women face a segmented labour market with sector specific jobs and often gender specific wages assigned to them. However, the world is witnessing a significant change in this traditional thinking regarding ability of women to work only in a few specific sectors. Gone are the days when women were employed mostly as low paid casual workers in agricultural and construction activities. Moreover, it is often argued that globalization is leading to the feminization of the labour force as subcontracting - employing women under informal conditions involves lower labour cost (Sethuraman, 1998)¹. It is also believed that such feminization is the result of growing flexibility in the labour market whereby women find themselves in traditionally male dominated jobs. In addition, certain jobs may have changed their characteristics and acquired those associated traditionally with women's work- informal contracts, lower remuneration, less security, lower skills etc. (Unni et al., 2000)² have argued that these trends are partly due to improvements in the measurement of women's activities or extension of the definition of economic activities, and partly due to the significant entry of women into the labour market at the face of global structural adjustment and hence, it becomes necessary for them to undertake market activities to maintain their families. Moreover, women are found to depend on informal sector more heavily than men, and as a result, their share in this sector is higher than their share in total labour force (Charmes, 1999)³. Even within the informal sector, most of the women are unaccounted workers or home-based workers. However, this traditional setting is changing, albeit slowly, and the share of women in employment is increasing. Apart from agriculture, women in India are mostly employed in manufacturing activities (NSSO, 2001)⁴. In addition, in the process of '*feminization*', a substantial number of women are employed in the micro and small enterprises (MSEs).

However, the decision making of women to participate in the labour force depends on personal and various other family related factors, like the size of the family, the number of earning members, the number of dependents, the number of school going children, the nature of family say, joint or nuclear, the educational and occupational status of the husband etc. As discussed above, many factors determine the work force participation of women. After entry of women at job, the work environment- that includes the salary and allowances provided, the leave facilities available, the nature of the work, the relationship with the co-workers and the immediate supervisors, the infrastructure facilities provided have all influenced the level of satisfaction of the workers at their work place.

More specifically, the present study is an empirical investigation into the identification of factors that determine the level of job satisfaction of the female labour force working in the Hosiery Units of Tiruppur, Coimbatore and the problems faced by them while carrying out the house hold duties and carrying out the duties at work place on the basis of micro-level data.

PROBLEMS OF WORKING WOMEN

The problems of working women are multidimensional and differ from woman to woman. The problems are different

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for different sections of women- such as rural and urban women in joint family, nuclear or extended family, of orthodox and modern atmosphere in the place of work, attitudes of the fellow workers and the authority, age of the women, kind of work, timings of work, distance of work-place from the house etc., are important factors in the lives of working women.

The condition of working women in India and the entire world, in general, is considered to be very distressing. Working women in general are subject to discrimination at various levels. Hence, the conditions need to be analyzed in depth.

Working Women employed in various salaried jobs and professions found that their problems are of three types: environmental, social and psychological. In each of them, the problems emerge due to the strained situations at home and work place. In turn, they are due to two factors; one is the inner conflict due to dual commitment and concern, and the other is the practical difficulty of combining the dual commitment.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

SOURCES OF DATA

The prime objective of the present piece of research is to examine the level of job satisfaction of working women. This required the collection of primary data from the women working in Hosiery units at Tiruppur.

PRIMARY DATA

The first step in the primary data collection is the identification of hosiery units. Though there are more than 6000 units operating within the limits of Tiruppur, almost 50 percent of them are unregistered units and they take up only job works. As a result, they mostly employ contract labourers and hence, provision of employment in these firms is highly volatile in nature. To understand the working condition and work environment, a continuous work in a particular firm or unit is a pre-requisite as it is the experience alone that could provide a clear understanding of the prevailing working conditions and work environment. Hence, the sample women workers were collected from the registered units. There are around 3000 units which got registered in TEA (Tiruppur Exporters' Association). The officials of TEA were approached and a list of the addresses of the hosiery units operating in the area of Tiruppur is obtained. From this list, 100 hosiery units were selected randomly.

The 100 hosiery units were approached and from these units, a list of women working in these units was prepared. From these lists, five working women from each of the list, (from each of the units) were selected at random. Hence, the study has a total of 500 samples selected by adopting the sampling technique of two stage random sampling technique.

VARIABLES ON JOB SATISFACTION AND WORK ENVIRONMENT

The prime objective of the present piece of research is to examine the level of job satisfaction of the sample women workers and their opinion on work environment. This again requires the identification of the variables under these dimensions. For this purpose, the studies carried out in the areas of job satisfaction and work environment were referred to. From these studies, in the case of job satisfaction [Glisson C. and Durick, M (1988)⁵, Seasohore, S.E and Taber, T.D (1975)⁶, Skyme, D.J. (2000)⁷, Spector, Paul E. (1997)⁸, Szulanski, G. (1996)⁹] the factors like Tenure of job, type of wage, amount of wage, distance to work place, Mode of transportation, Mode of Entry to the present Job, loan facilities, decision making power, Amount of wage, work load, amount of bonus, over time wage, Working hours, Chances for promotion, Method of wage payment, Compensation provided to employees, Maternity leave provided, Casual leave, ESI benefits, Provident fund scheme provided, Medical leave provided, the work environment facilities [Litwin, G. H. and Stringer, R. A., (1968)¹⁰, Chidambaram, L. and Bostrom, R. (1993)¹¹, Emiko Usui (2003)¹², Lutz C. Kaiser (2005)¹³, Lakshmy Devi K.R (2002)¹⁴] are being measured in terms of Clean environment, Availability of spittoons, Working conditions of machines and tools, Availability of fire extinguishing equipments, Nature of building, Transport facilities provided, Availability of clean and safe drinking water, Lighting and ventilation, Availability of toilet facility, Pause time provided, Provision of safety measures, Availability of restroom, Free refreshments, Availability of canteen facility, Night shift system and Quarters facilities.

DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE WOMEN RESPONDENTS BY OPINION ON THE CONTRIBUTION OF JOB TO FAMILY LIVING

The ultimate aim of taking up a job is to earn a livelihood. The needs differ as per the socio- economic conditions of the respondents which differed widely as discussed earlier. Hence, it becomes pertinent to understand the aim behind taking up the job and in the present paragraph, such an attempt has been made. To examine the relative importance of the various needs of life, the composite rank index has been calculated for the four broad level of opinion namely, Very High, High, Neutral, Low and Very Low and they are discussed.

As it could be seen in Table 1, the female worker respondents viewed the factor “An opportunity to provide three meals a day” as the utmost important factor for taking up a job. The next important reason for taking up the job is because it gives the respondent the “Opportunity to provide the required number of pairs of clothes” to his/her family. The third important factor is “Chance to acquire knowledge and skill”. The order of the other factors is: “Opportunity to reside in a decent house”, “Opportunity to improve the standard of living”, “Recognition from the family and friends”, “Chance to take part in the decision making process of the family”, “Chance to spare money for family commitments”, “Chance to take part in the decision making process of the family”, “For availing loan to satisfy the long term ambitions”, “Chance to spend independently” and “Chance to save independently”. The analysis indicates that the worker respondents give the utmost importance to feeding their family members, while the next most important factor considered is the provision of required number of clothes. As it is known, people generally provide the importance in order as food, clothing and housing. This traditional importance is being satisfied as per the views of the respondents who are from the poor socio- economic status. Thus, from the analysis, it can be concluded that a majority of the sample respondents have given the utmost importance to the provision of food to the members of the families.

COMPOSITE RANK INDICES OF THE FACTORS ON JOB SATISFACTION

As it could be seen in Table 2, to measure the level of job satisfaction, the factors like wage, work load, bonus payments, over time wage, job security, working hours, promotion policies, mode of wage payment, compensatory leave provided, cash leave, ESI leave, provident fund provided, medical facilities extended within the work place in case of emergency, medical facilities provided and medical level were examined. The composite rank index worked out indicated that on an average, the women workers are just satisfied with the factors on job satisfaction. The order of the other levels of satisfaction is: highly dissatisfied, just satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and highly dissatisfied. Thus, from the analysis, it can be concluded that on an average, the women workers are just dissatisfied with the factors on job satisfaction.

COMPOSITE RANK INDICES OF THE FACTORS ON SATISFACTION AT THE WORK PLACE

As it could be seen in Table 3, to measure the level of satisfaction at the work place, the factors like cleanliness of the work place and the availability of spittoons, machine tools, fire extinguisher, drinking water facility, ventilation facilities, toilet facilities, nature of building, provision of transport facility to staff, duration of pause time provided, safety measures, rest room facilities, refreshment provided during the working hours, availability of canteen, time duration of the shift system and the provision of Quarters facility were considered. The composite rank index worked out indicated that on an average, the women workers are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the work place environment. The order of the other levels of satisfaction include: just satisfied, just dissatisfied, highly dissatisfied and highly satisfied. Thus, from the analysis, it can be concluded that on the average, the women workers are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the work place environment.

SAMPLE WOMEN RESPONDENTS' OPINION BY RANKING ON THE PROBLEMS FACED IN CARRYING OUT THE HOUSEHOLD DUTIES

As indicated already, the status of women in the Indian context is that they play multifarious roles, with the major role of being a home maker. This requires a considerable time to be spent at home performing house hold chores. In a situation when the workload at the workplace is heavy or the nature of work is monotonous, they may find it difficult

to spare considerable time period at home. This in turn increases the level of dissatisfaction on the job further. Hence, it becomes pertinent to understand the problems faced by the sample workers in carrying out their household duties. As it could be seen in Table 4, a majority of the sample women viewed that due to their participation in the workload, they could not devote adequate time for household activities. This has been followed by the opinion on 'could not devote adequate time to take care of the welfare of the family members', 'could not get help from the family members in household work', 'could not devote adequate time for social get togethers and could not get sufficient leisure time'.

SAMPLE WOMEN RESPONDENTS' OPINION BY RANKING THE PROBLEMS FACED AT THE WORK PLACE IN CARRYING OUT THEIR DUTIES

As indicated above, apart from the difficulties faced by the working women at home in carrying out their varied household activities that results in dissatisfaction at work, the work place environment also creates dissatisfaction which ultimately reduces their productivity.

As it could be seen in Table 5, a majority of the women workers viewed that poor health affects their productivity. The second foremost factor that creates dissatisfaction at the work place is 'tortures by the higher authorities' which creates dissatisfaction at work and which ultimately affects the productivity. The order of other factors that creates dissatisfaction is: "heavy noise pollution that affects the productivity", "no recognition from co-workers and higher authorities" and "the poor awareness on the technical know-how at work".

Thus, from the analysis, it can be concluded that a majority of the sample respondents held the view that participation in the labour market resulted in poor availability of time due to inadequacy of time to be spared for household activities. Thus, from the analysis, it can be concluded that according to a majority of the women workers, the poor health status brings the highest level of dissatisfaction at work place which ultimately affects the productivity.

FINDINGS

- 1) A majority of the sample respondents are just dissatisfied with the wages provided.
- 2) A majority of the sample respondents are just dissatisfied with the workload.
- 3) A majority of the sample respondents are just dissatisfied with the bonus provided.
- 4) A majority of the sample respondents are just dissatisfied with the over time wages provided.
- 5) A majority of the sample respondents are highly dissatisfied with the job security .
- 6) A majority of the sample respondents are highly dissatisfied with the working hours.
- 7) A majority of the sample respondents are highly dissatisfied with the promotion policies of the firm.
- 8) A majority of the sample respondents are just satisfied with the mode of payment of wages.
- 9) A majority of the sample respondents are highly dissatisfied with the compensatory leave provided.
- 10) A majority of the sample respondents are just dissatisfied with the casual leave provided.
- 11) A majority of the sample respondents are highly dissatisfied with the provision of ESI benefits.
- 12) A majority of the sample respondents are highly dissatisfied with the PF facilities provided by the firm.
- 13) A majority of the sample respondents are highly dissatisfied with the medical facilities provided by the firm.
- 14) A majority of the sample respondents are just dissatisfied with the medical leave facilities provided by the firm.
- 15) A majority of the sample respondents are just dissatisfied with the cleanliness of the work place.
- 16) A majority of the sample respondents are highly dissatisfied with the availability of spittoons at the work place.
- 17) A majority of the sample respondents are just satisfied with the availability of machines and tools.
- 18) A majority of the sample respondents are just satisfied with the availability of fire extinguishers.
- 19) A majority of the sample respondents are just satisfied with the nature of the building.
- 20) A majority of the sample respondents say that there are no transportation facilities provided.
- 21) A majority of the sample respondents are highly satisfied with the availability of water facility.
- 22) A majority of the sample respondents are just satisfied with the provision of ventilation facilities.
- 23) A majority of the sample respondents are highly dissatisfied with availability of toilet facilities.
- 24) A majority of the sample respondents are just dissatisfied with the pause time provided by their company.
- 25) A majority of the sample respondents are just satisfied with the safety measures provided by the company.
- 26) A majority of the sample respondents are just dissatisfied with the availability of rest room facilities.

- 27) A majority of the sample respondents are highly dissatisfied with the refreshment facilities provided at the work place.
- 28) A majority of the sample respondents are highly dissatisfied with the provision of canteen facilities at the work place.
- 29) A majority of the sample respondents are highly dissatisfied with the duration of night shift.
- 30) On an average, the women workers are just satisfied with the factors on job satisfaction.
- 31) On an average, the women workers are Neither Satisfied nor dissatisfied with the work place environment.
- 32) A majority of the sample respondents viewed that their participation in the labour market has resulted in poor availability of time to be spared for household activities.
- 33) For a majority of the women workers, the poor health status brings the highest level of dissatisfaction at the work place, which ultimately affects the productivity.
- 34) A majority of the sample women workers viewed discrimination by gender as the major factor that determines the work environment of a work place.
- 35) According to the views of the women worker respondents, workers' coordination in the department is the major factor that determines the work place environment.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Many of the workers of this Industry derive low level of satisfaction on working conditions because their grievances are too many. Hence, it has been suggested that the management should create grievance-redressal cells to redress the workers' grievances. A grievance box can be maintained to receive the complaints from workers and such complaints can be placed before the grievance cell for timely discussion and appropriate solution. It will help to settle the issues then and there.
2. The study reveals that the majority of the women workers in hosiery units were not satisfied with the deduction of wages for ESI and PF. During the data collection, they expressed their dissatisfaction with this practice; even though their money was getting saved; but it reduced the amount of the take home pay. It is very significant to note that the management's contribution to the ESI and PF is very less. So, the workers find it very difficult to cover their household expenses.
3. Bonus is an inevitable problem, which usually arises during the Deepavali festival. The study shows that most of the women workers not satisfied with the bonus given by the hosiery units. The Bonus should be dispensed well in advance rather waiting for the festive occasion. Apart from giving out such a provision at an appropriate time, the amount that is being given should also be adequate.
4. Women workers need care and rest during their maternity period, which can be approved by providing adequate maternity leave. It is essential for the management to be magnanimous and generous in providing leave with normal wage that assist their medical expenses and health risk. Workers fail to take care of their health due to insufficiency of money as well as time. If the management conducts a frequent medical camp, the confidence of workers will improve if they are physically and mentally well. So, provisions for health check ups will upgrade their concentration and dedication, which leads to job satisfaction resulting in benefit of management also.
5. The analysis indicated that the family environment has a significant influence on the level of satisfaction in the job and the work environment. Hence, the management can arrange for counseling of women on the matters pertaining to their family problems. This would help in improving the job satisfaction of women workers.

CONCLUSION

In the present study, an attempt was made to examine the factors determining the level of satisfaction of the sample women workers on opinion and the level of satisfaction on job related factors, work place and the work environment or work setting. The analysis indicated that, with regard to work place environment, the workers were Neither Satisfied nor dissatisfied. A majority viewed that though taking up a job increases the earnings of the family, but it significantly affects the time spent in doing household activities. For the workers, the poor health status, discrimination by gender and workers' coordination in the department are the leading factors that determine the work place environment. The analysis has provided the conclusion that the women sample workers in hosiery units at Tirupur are only moderately satisfied with the job, the job content and the work environment.

Table: 1
Distribution Of Sample Women Respondents By Opinion On The Contribution Of Job To Family Living

OPINION									
S.No	Factors	Very High	High	Neutral	Low	Very Low	Weighted Index	Rank	
1.	Opportunity to provide three meals a day	215	162	43	42	38	836	1	
2.	Opportunity to provide the required number of pairs of clothes	172	153	28	82	65	890	2	
3.	Opportunity to reside in a decent house	132	152	36	95	85	924	4	
4.	Chance to spend independently	97	138	85	93	87	1000	11	
5.	Chance to save independently	91	92	67	132	118	1004	12	
6.	Opportunity to improve the standard of living	143	117	37	109	94	924	4	
7.	Chance to spare money for family commitments	113	138	53	95	101	928	8	
8.	Chances for availing loan to satisfy the long term ambition	124	142	65	95	74	983	10	
9.	Recognition from the family and friends	137	154	48	84	77	925	6	
10.	Chances to take part in the decision making process of the family	108	147	92	74	79	974	9	
11.	Chances to take part in the decision making process of the family	37	42	51	163	207	926	7	
12.	Chances to acquire knowledge and skill	74	165	58	61	42	922	3	
Source: Computed from Primary Data.									

Table:2
Composite Rank Indices Of The Factors On Job Satisfaction

Factors	Wage	Work Load	Bonus	Over Time Wage	Job Security	Working Hours	Promotions Policies	Mode Of Wage Payment	Compensatory Leave	CL	ESI	PF	Medical Facilities	Medical & Maternity Leave	Rank sum Total	Composite Rank Index
Highly Satisfied	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	2	4	4	5	4	4	5	61	5
Just Satisfied	4	3	3	3	3	3	5	1	3	3	3	3	3	4	44	3
Neither Satisfied nor dissatisfied	3	5	4	4	4	4	3	5	5	5	4	5	5	3	59	4
Just dissatisfied	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	3	2	1	2	2	2	1	21	1
Highly dissatisfied	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	4	1	2	1	1	1	2	25	2

Source: Computed from Primary Data.

Table:3
Composite Rank Indices of the Factors On Satisfaction At The Workplace

Factors Opinion	Clean liness	Spitt oons	Machine Tools	Fire Exting uisher	Build ing	Transport Facility	Drinking Water	Ventil ation	Toilet Facility	Pause time	Safety measure	Rest room	Refresh ment	Canteen	Shift system	Quarters facility	Rank Sum Total	Composite Rank Index
Highly Satisfied	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	80	5
Just Satisfied	1	2	4	4	4	2	4	4	2	2	4	2	2	2	1	2	42	2
Neither Sa- tisfied nor dissatisfied	2	1	3	2	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	1	25	1
Just dissatisfied	4	3	2	1	3	4	2	2	3	4	2	4	3	1	3	4	45	3
Highly dissatisfied	3	4	1	3	2	3	3	1	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	48	4

Source: Computed from Primary Data.

Table: 4
Distribution Of Sample Women Respondents' Opinion By Ranking On The Problems Faced In Carrying Out The Household Duties

S. No.	Factors	Ranking					Rank Sum Total	Composite Rank
		1	2	3	4	5		
1.	Could not Devote Adequate time for Household Activities	184	123	98	41	54	1158	3
2.	Could not Devote Adequate time to take care of the welfare of the family members	245	109	61	49	36	1022	1
3.	Could not get help from the family members in household work	222	142	69	16	51	1032	2
4.	Could not Devote Adequate time for social get-togethers	154	111	79	88	68	1305	4
5.	Could not get sufficient leisure time	84	121	89	71	135	1552	5
Source: Computed from Primary Data.								

Table: 5
Distribution Of Sample Women Respondents' Opinion By Ranking On The Problems Faced At The Work Place In Carrying Out Their Duties

S. No.	Factors	Ranking					Rank Sum Total	Composite Rank
		1	2	3	4	5		
1.	No recognition from co-workers and higher authorities	179	84	91	69	77	1281	4
	Percentage	35.80	16.80	18.20	13.80	15.40	100	
2.	Tortures of the higher authorities	201	159	54	28	58	1083	2
	Percentage	40.20	31.80	10.80	5.60	11.60	100	
3.	Not aware of technical know-how	113	108	91	73	115	1469	5
	Percentage	22.60	21.60	18.20	14.60	23.00	100	
4.	Poor health status that affects the productivity	261	121	54	46	18	939	1
	Percentage	52.20	24.20	10.80	9.20	3.60	100	
5.	Heavy noise pollution affects the productivity	184	129	94	61	32	1128	3
	Percentage	36.80	25.80	18.80	12.20	6.40	100	
Source: Computed from Primary Data.								

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