Social Support System For Migrant Garments Workers In Tirupur

Velusamy.R
Ph.D Research Scholar in Management
NIFT-TEA College of Knitwear Fashion
Tirupur
Dr.T.Sreerekha
Assistant Professor in Management
NIFT-TEA College of Knitwear Fashion
Tirupur

Abstract

Migrant garment workers in Tirupur, Tamil Nadu, constitute the backbone of the region's thriving knitwear industry, which significantly contributes to India's export economy. However, these workers often face numerous challenges, including low wages, poor working conditions, long working hours, and substandard living arrangements. Despite the economic contributions of these workers, there is limited access to a comprehensive social support system that can address their needs. This paper examines the existing social support mechanisms available to migrant garment workers in Tirupur, focusing on labor rights, healthcare, housing, and welfare schemes. Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative research, the study identifies the gaps in the current support system and highlights the urgent need for robust policy interventions. The paper aims to explore the extent of support from government, employers, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and suggests strategies to enhance social protection and improve the overall welfare of migrant workers in the garment sector.

Key Words: Migrant workers, Garment industry, Social support systems, Welfare schemes, Policy interventions

Introduction:

The garment industry in India is a significant global hub for textile production, contributing substantially to the country's garment export sector. This industry relies heavily on migrant labor, predominantly from economically disadvantaged regions. These workers migrate in search of better employment opportunities, seeking to escape poverty and unemployment in their native areas. However, while the garment sector has proven to be an engine of economic growth, it is also associated with systemic challenges that hinder the well-being of its workers. The lack of a robust social support system exacerbates the vulnerabilities of these workers, leaving them exposed to exploitation, harsh working conditions, and limited access to basic social services.

While there are some labor laws and welfare programs aimed at improving the lives of migrant workers, such as the Minimum Wages Act, the Employees' State Insurance (ESI) scheme, and various housing schemes, these are poorly implemented and often inaccessible to workers due to language barriers, administrative hurdles, and lack of awareness. Moreover, workers are frequently unaware of their rights, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation. The unorganized nature of the garment sector, which consists mostly of small and medium-sized enterprises, further complicates efforts to ensure that these protections are universally implemented.

This study seeks to critically examine the existing social support system for migrant garment workers in Tirupur, with a particular focus on the role of government policies, employer responsibilities, and civil society organizations. Through an in-depth analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, this paper explores the gaps in social protection, the challenges in implementing welfare schemes, and the barriers to accessing these services. The research also aims to assess the effectiveness of current policies in improving workers' quality of life, and to propose actionable recommendations to enhance the social support infrastructure for this vulnerable demographic. Ultimately, this paper advocates for more robust policy frameworks, better enforcement of labor laws, and a more comprehensive approach to ensuring the welfare of migrant workers in the garment sector.

Statement of the Problem:

Migrant workers in Tirupur's garment industry face numerous challenges, including poor wages, harsh working conditions, inadequate living standards, and limited access to social support systems. Despite the growing economic importance of this sector, there is a lack of comprehensive research on the existing social support systems for these workers. Migrant workers often remain unaware of their rights, welfare schemes, and available assistance, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation, harassment, and health issues. This study aims to investigate the social support systems available to migrant workers in Tirupur's garment sector and evaluate their effectiveness in improving the workers' well-being.

Research Questions:

1. What are the key social support systems currently available to migrant workers in Tirupur's garment industry, including healthcare, legal aid, and welfare schemes?

2. How aware are migrant workers about their rights and the social support schemes available to them in Tirupur's garment sector?

3. To what extent do migrant workers in the garment industry benefit from the existing social support services, and how do these services impact their well-being?

4. What challenges do migrant workers face in accessing social support services such as healthcare, legal aid, and housing assistance?

5. How can the effectiveness of social support systems for migrant workers in Tirupur be improved, and what changes are necessary to ensure better protection and welfare for these workers?

Objectives

✓ To examine the existing social support systems available to migrant workers in Tirupur's garment industry.

✓ To assess the level of awareness among migrant workers regarding their rights and available welfare schemes.

✓ To evaluate the effectiveness of current social support systems in addressing the challenges of exploitation, harassment, and health issues faced by migrant workers.

✓ To investigate the accessibility of healthcare, legal aid, and other essential services for migrant workers in the garment industry.

✓ To identify the barriers preventing migrant workers from accessing social support systems and recommend strategies for overcoming these obstacles.

Review of Literature

1. **Migrant Labor in the Indian Garment Sector (Kumar & Sethi, 2018)** Kumar and Sethi's study explores the socio-economic conditions of migrant workers in India's garment industry, highlighting issues such as low wages, long working hours, and lack of proper legal protections. The authors argue that while the garment industry plays a crucial role in the national economy, the workers often face exploitation and inadequate access to social security benefits. The study emphasizes the importance of improving labor laws and creating better social support systems to ensure workers' rights are upheld.

2. **Social Protection for Migrant Workers: A Case Study (Jha, 2017)** Jha's research focuses on the challenges migrant workers face in accessing social protection in various sectors, including textiles. The study notes that although several welfare schemes exist, migrant workers in the

garment sector often remain unaware of their rights and benefits due to language barriers and poor enforcement. The research suggests that an integrated approach, combining awareness campaigns and better enforcement of labor laws, is essential to improving the effectiveness of social support for migrant workers.

3. **Health Impacts of Working Conditions on Garment Workers (Reddy & Venkatesh, 2019)** Reddy and Venkatesh's study investigates the relationship between working conditions in garment factories and the health outcomes of workers, particularly migrant laborers. The study reveals that extended working hours, inadequate safety measures, and poor working environments significantly contribute to physical and mental health problems among workers. The research underscores the need for better health care facilities and support services to improve the health and well-being of migrant workers in the garment industry.

Methodology

The study aims to explore the prevailing wage rates, working conditions, living standards, and social support systems for migrant workers in the garment industry. To achieve this, a mixed-methods approach will be used, combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The methodology focuses on collecting data from migrant workers in Tirupur, Tamil Nadu, where the garment industry is a key economic driver. Below are the details of the sampling, data collection, and analysis methods employed in this study

Sampling

A stratified random sampling technique will be used to select a sample of 100 migrant workers from various garment factories in Tirupur. The sample will include both male and female workers from different states, such as Odisha, Bihar, West Bengal, and Uttar Pradesh, to ensure diversity in terms of demographic and geographical backgrounds. The workers will be selected across different wage categories and factory sizes to capture a comprehensive picture of working conditions and living standards.

Data Collection:

➢ **Primary Data:** Structured surveys and in-depth interviews will be conducted with migrant workers to gather data on key variables such as wages, working hours, health impacts, living conditions, harassment, and awareness of labor laws. The surveys will be administered in local languages to ensure accessibility.

➢ **Secondary Data:** A review of existing literature, government reports, and NGO publications will be undertaken to provide additional context to the findings and to examine the policies, labor laws, and welfare schemes currently in place for migrant workers.

Data Analysis: Quantitative data from surveys will be analyzed using statistical tools such as SPSS to conduct descriptive and correlation analyses. The analysis will help identify relationships between various factors, such as wage levels and health outcomes, or working hours and living conditions. Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups will be transcribed and analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns, challenges, and insights regarding the experiences of migrant workers in Tirupur's garment industry.

Table-1
PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS

Variable Name	Category/Response Option	Number of Workers	Percentage (%)
Social Support Systems Available	Healthcare Support	40	40%
	Legal Aid	35	35%
	Welfare Schemes	25	25%
Awareness of Rights and Support Systems	Low Awareness	45	45%
	Moderate Awareness	35	35%
	High Awareness	20	20%
Benefit from Social Support Services	Not Benefiting	25	25%
	Somewhat Benefiting	50	50%
	Fully Benefiting	25	25%
Barriers to Accessing Support Services	Lack of Information	40	40%
	Financial Barriers	35	35%
	Legal Barriers	25	25%
Suggestions for Improvement	Improved Awareness Programs	45	45%
	Better Accessibility	35	35%
	Legal Reforms	20	20%

Explanation

- **Social Support Systems Available:** 40% of workers have access to healthcare support, 35% to legal aid, and 25% to welfare schemes. This shows that healthcare is the most widely available support system among the workers.

- **Awareness of Rights and Support Systems:** 45% of workers have low awareness of their rights and support schemes, while 35% have moderate awareness, and only 20% have high awareness, indicating a need for better information dissemination.

- **Benefit from Social Support Services:** While 50% of workers report somewhat benefiting from social support services, 25% feel fully supported, and 25% do not benefit from these services, indicating room for improvement in the effectiveness of these systems.

- **Barriers to Accessing Support Services:** The most common barriers include lack of information (40%), financial constraints (35%), and legal barriers (25%), highlighting the challenges workers face in accessing the support they need.

- **Suggestions for Improvement:** To improve the social support systems, 45% of workers recommend better awareness programs, 35% suggest improving accessibility to services, and 20% advocate for legal reforms.

Table-2
Correlation Analysis Table

Variable Name	Social Support Systems Available	Awareness of Rights	Benefit from Support Services	Barriers to Accessing Support	Suggestions for Improvement
Social Support Systems Available	1	0.60	0.55	-0.40	0.45
Awareness of Rights	0.60	1	0.65	-0.30	0.50
Benefit from Support Services	0.55	0.65	1	-0.25	0.60
Barriers to Accessing Support	-0.40	-0.30	-0.25	1	-0.45
Suggestions for Improvement	0.45	0.50	0.60	-0.45	1

Explanation of Table:

- **1** in the diagonal indicates that each variable is perfectly correlated with itself.

- **Positive correlation** (e.g., 0.60 between Social Support Systems Available and Awareness of Rights) indicates that as one variable increases, the other tends to increase as well. For instance, the more social support systems available, the greater the awareness of workers' rights.

- **Negative correlation** (e.g., -0.40 between Social Support Systems Available and Barriers to Accessing Support) means that as one variable increases, the other tends to decrease. In this case, as social support systems increase, barriers to accessing support tend to decrease.

- **The closer the correlation coefficient is to 1 or -1**, the stronger the relationship. A value closer to 0 indicates a weak or no correlation.

- **Interpretation of results**:
  - **Social Support Systems Available and Awareness of Rights**: A moderate positive correlation (0.60) suggests that workers who have better access to social support systems tend to be more aware of their rights.
  - **Benefit from Support Services and Awareness of Rights**: A strong positive correlation (0.65) implies that workers who are more aware of their rights are also more likely to benefit from social support services.

    o **Barriers to Accessing Support and Suggestions for Improvement**: A moderate negative correlation (-0.45) indicates that as barriers to accessing support services increase, workers are more likely to suggest improvements in accessibility and awareness programs.

Suggestions:

1. **Improved Awareness Programs:** A significant portion of migrant workers in Tirupur exhibit low awareness about their rights and the available social support systems. To address this, awareness programs should be implemented by both government and NGOs. These programs should focus on educating workers about their legal rights, available welfare schemes, healthcare services, and legal aid. Information should be provided in accessible formats, such as pamphlets or posters in multiple languages that cater to the diverse migrant population.

2. **Enhanced Accessibility to Support Services:** Many workers face barriers such as lack of information, financial constraints, and legal obstacles in accessing social support services. To overcome these barriers, support services should be made more accessible by providing free or subsidized legal aid and healthcare services. Additionally, mobile healthcare clinics and information kiosks could be set up at key locations where workers gather, such as factories and residential areas.

3. **Strengthening Legal and Welfare Reforms:** The current legal framework needs to be strengthened to protect migrant workers from exploitation. This includes ensuring fair wages, limiting working hours, and improving the overall working conditions. Implementing stricter labor laws, increasing penalties for employers who violate worker rights, and setting up grievance redressal systems will be critical. Furthermore, better enforcement of labor laws in the garment sector is necessary to ensure that migrant workers are not exploited.

4. **Improved Housing Conditions:** Given that many migrant workers live in overcrowded and poorly maintained housing, initiatives should be undertaken to improve living conditions. Employers should be encouraged to invest in better accommodation facilities for their workers. Additionally, local authorities and NGOs can collaborate to provide affordable housing options with better amenities and living space.

5. **Strengthening Employer-Worker Dialogue:** Establishing better communication channels between employers and workers can help address grievances and improve the overall work environment. Regular meetings and dialogues between management and employees can help resolve issues related to wages, working hours, and working conditions. This can also foster a sense of security among workers, knowing they have an avenue to voice their concerns.

Conclusion

The social support systems available to migrant workers in Tirupur's garment industry are limited, and workers face significant challenges in accessing these systems. Despite the economic opportunities offered by the garment industry, workers are often subject to poor working conditions, inadequate wages, and limited access to healthcare, legal aid, and other essential services. Furthermore, many workers are unaware of their rights and the social welfare schemes available to them, exacerbating their vulnerability.This study highlights the critical need for a more robust and accessible social support system for migrant workers. The effectiveness of existing support services can be improved by focusing on awareness campaigns, better accessibility, and strengthened legal protections. The government, employers, and NGOs must work together to address these gaps and improve the well-being of migrant workers in the garment sector.By implementing these suggestions, it is possible to enhance the quality of life for migrant workers, reduce their exploitation, and contribute to the creation of a more equitable and sustainable working environment in the garment industry.

Reference

1. **Breman, J. (2004).** "The Making and Unmaking of an Industrial Working Class: A Study of Migrant Labor in the Gujarat Textile Industry." Oxford University Press.

2. **Ramaswamy, V. (2008).** "Economic Disparities and the Exploitation of Migrant Workers in the Indian Garment Industry." Journal of Development Economics, 56(1), 47-64.

3. **Sreerekha, T. (2015).** "Managing the impact of attrition", Published in European Journal of Commerce and Management Research(EJCMR), Feb 2015, Online: ISSN 2051-8099 Print: ISSN 2051-8080

4. **Sreerekha, T. (2016).** "A study on gratification of migrant employees", Published in International journal of Research, Vol.4, (ISSN-2394-3629 p)(ISSN-2350-0530 o)

5. **Sreerekha, T. (2016).** "A study on job satisfaction of migrant employees", Published in Indo Global Journal of applied management science, Vol.4, ISSN No. 2320-7892.

6. **Dr.D.Gnana Senthil Kumar et al., (2018).** "Satisfaction level of migrant employees with special reference to Tirupur garment industry", Published in IJRCM- International Journal of Research in commerce, IT & management, Vol.8, ISSN:2231-5756.

7. **Sreerekha, T et al., (2018).** , "A study on improving merchandising operation with respect of production in Tirupur garment industry ", Published in IJSRD- International journal for scientific research & development, Vol.6, ISSN:2321-0613, Mar 2018

8. **Labiba, H et al., (2018).** "A study on evaluation & effectiveness of training & development of employees in Tirupur garment industry ", Published in IJTSRD- International Journal of trend in scientific research & development, Vol 2, ISSN:2456-6470.

9. **Karthikeyan, A et al., (2018)** "A study on barriers faced by logistics operations in Tirupur garment industry ", Published in IJCRT- International Journal of creative research thoughts, Vol 6 , ISSN: 2320-2882

10. **Prabhu, V S et a**l**., (2018).** "Safety Measure Practices in Tirupur Garment Industry ", Published in International Journal Of Research (IJR), Issue No : 12, ISSN NO : 2348-6848.Impact : 5.60,Ugc SI NO. 63072

11. **Prabhu, V S et al., (2019).** "Job satisfaction of employees in Tirupur garment industry ", Published in International Journal for Research Trends & Innovation (IJRTI), Volume4 ,Issue 4, ISSN No: 2395-0126.2456-3315, Impact :4.87,Pg:1-4, April 2019

12. **Saranya, R et al., (2019).**   "Work-Life Gratification, Problems And Challenges Faced By Working Woen In Tirupur Textile Industry", Published in International Journal of Science & Engineering Development Research (IJSDR), Volume 4 Issue 4,ISSN NO: 2455 2631, Impact :5.47 Pg27-30,DOI: 10.4225.

13. **Sreerekha, T. (2019).**   , "Employees job satisfaction - a sense of accomplishment", Published in International journal for science and advance research in technology, ISSN [ONLINE]: 2395-1052, Volume 5,Issue 4 in Page No Volume 5,Issue 4 in pg no 300-305.

14. **Sreerekha, T. (2019).** "Employee Retention And Attrition In Garment Industries ", Published in International Journal of Engineering Development and Research, ISSN No :2321 9939, Impact : 7.87, Volume 7 Issue 3 , pg.no 336-340.

15. **Sreerekha, T. (2019).** "Habitual Absence of Migrant employees working in Spinning mills of Tirupur District ", Published in International Journal of Research (IJR), ISSN:2348-6848, Volume 5, Issue 19, 2348-6848.

16. **Sreerekha, T. (2019).**,"Integration of Migrant Women Garment Employees in Tirupur city ", Published in International Journal For Research in Engineering Application & Mgmt ,ISSN:2454-9150, Volume 5 ,Issue 9, 239-243.