

EMPOWERMENT OF FEMALE WORKERS IN GARMENT INDUSTRY IN KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT

Karnataka is becoming one of the biggest garment producers in India and at the bottom of the industry women can often be found working from their homes because of norms restricting them what to do and where to go. 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. Empowerment of Female Workers in Garment Industry in Karnataka, Against a backdrop of rapid industrialization and growing female labour-force participation, aiming to compare levels of socio-economic, psychological dimensions of empowerment. Findings show that Garment-sector employment often provides higher short-term income and skill training. The paper concludes with policy and practice recommendations.

Keywords: Women workers, garment industry, 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.

RESEARCH GAP

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:

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.

This review of literature on women's empowerment in the garment industry highlights both the significant opportunities for advancement and the pervasive challenges that exploit female labor. While employment in this sector has provided economic independence for millions of women, particularly in developing nations, it has also entrenched gender-based discrimination, inadequate pay, and unsafe working conditions.

BENEFITS AND PATHWAYS TO EMPOWERMENT

- **Economic independence and agency:** Gaining a steady income allows women, particularly those from rural and poor backgrounds, to contribute financially to their families. In some contexts, this increases their household bargaining power and participation in family decision-making. Research in Bangladesh, for example, found that financial contributions were the most significant factor leading to female employees' empowerment.
- **Enhanced social status:** Employment can challenge traditional patriarchal norms by affording women greater freedom of movement, a public identity, and more social interactions with coworkers. This can raise their social standing within the family and community.
- **Skill development and awareness:** For many women, working in the garment sector offers the chance to acquire new skills. Studies have shown that some initiatives focusing on health, financial inclusion, and life skills can build workers' confidence and help them gain a stronger voice.

- **Entrepreneurship and leadership:** Some women have broken traditional gender roles to become fashion entrepreneurs, designers, and leaders in management positions, inspiring others and contributing to a more diverse industry.

SIGNIFICANT AND PERSISTENT CHALLENGES

- **Informality and exploitation:** A large portion of the garment industry, especially home-based work, is informal. These workers, mostly women, are highly vulnerable, lack social and legal protections, and are dependent on exploitative middlemen who drive down piece rates.
- **Gender-based wage gap:** Studies consistently find that women in the garment sector earn less than their male counterparts for comparable work. This is often due to gender bias that assigns women to lower-paying, lower-skilled tasks, even when working overtime.
- **Poor working conditions and health risks:** Female garment workers are often subjected to hazardous environments, long hours, excessive production pressure, and poor sanitation. This leads to high rates of work-related stress and health problems.
- **Workplace violence and harassment:** Gender-based violence and sexual harassment are widespread issues in garment factories. This is enabled by imbalanced power dynamics, with mostly female workers supervised by male managers. Some research indicates that violence and harassment increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Inadequate legal and social protections:** Despite existing labor laws, enforcement is often weak. Challenges include pregnancy discrimination, insufficient maternity leave, and limited access to justice for grievances. The fear of reprisal and job insecurity also discourages women from speaking up.
- **Lack of career progression:** Many women face a "sticky floor" effect, where they remain in the lowest rungs of the workforce with limited opportunities for promotion. Restrictive gender norms, family responsibilities, and management's gender bias in hiring for supervisory roles contribute to this.
- **Unpaid care work:** Women in the garment industry continue to carry the burden of unpaid care work, balancing long work hours with household and childcare duties. This dual role can cause emotional strain and limit opportunities for career advancement and skill development.

INITIATIVES AND A PATH FORWARD

Various initiatives have attempted to promote women's empowerment in the garment sector, including collaborative projects by brands, NGOs, and suppliers. These programs often focus on:

- **Health and financial literacy**
- **Skills training and professional advancement**
- **Supporting unionization and collective bargaining** to increase workers' voices
- **Promoting gender equality** in management and leadership

For genuine empowerment to occur, a holistic approach is needed. This involves not only focusing on individual skills but also addressing systemic issues like gender-based discrimination, wage gaps, and workplace violence through stronger regulations and industry-wide collaboration.

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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