

# CONTEMPORARY ISSUES OF WOMEN WORKERS IN THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY IN MUMBAI

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## Abstract

The Indian textile industry contributes to 7% of industry output in value terms, 2% of India's GDP and 15% of the country's export earnings. With over 45 million people employed directly, the textile industry is one of the largest sources of employment generation in the country. The textile mills strike triggered the closure of most of the mills, thereafter the mills were taken by National Textile Corporation Limited, a central govt. public sector undertaking. The mills are under the non-operational status which has seriously affected the wages of the workers and more adversely the women workers. The overall percentage of women employees in NTC is 18.96%. (NTC annual report 2019-20). Women who are employed in these mills are semi-literates, educated, unemployed and financially deprived. They are poorly paid in terms of wages, and work under deprived and vulnerable working conditions. Moreover, the women workers are sexually exploited and physically harassed, states Sivasubramanian K. (2019). The study focuses on the women workers and their plight during the non-operational period of the mills. The research is based on primary data using case study method. It is a qualitative and intense research which uses in-depth studies of small groups of people to identify the issues, their stemming points, and the needs of the target group and the intricacies of the problem. Generalisations can be formed from cases which have been analysed based on deductive reasoning.

**Keywords:** women workers, wages, non-operational, textile industry

## INTRODUCTION

The mills were started as private ventures but were nationalized in 1974 and one of the focuses for this was to generate employment opportunities. According to the Ministry of Textile annual report 2007-08, NTCL, the central govt public sector undertaking under the Ministry of Textile, engaged in the production of yarn and fabric through these mills, was also a caretaker of these mills. However, in 2019 with continued lockdown, it became difficult for the mills to maintain themselves with rising cost of raw material, maintenance cost running into crores, the mills got declared non-operational. In a way for the labourers, mills were closed as they were asked not to come for work. Women workers were the one who were hit hardest with this decision. The female workers have opted out side jobs like toran making, tailoring work, tiffin service, working as house maids, domestic servants etc. to survive during this phase. One of the common problems which most of them faced was their helplessness in joining private sector jobs as mill jobs did not allow them to join corporate jobs due to dual PF deductions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Panigrahi et al (2020), studied 'Impact of coronavirus outbreak on Indian textile sector'. The article traces that production, turnover, employment, export, everything was affected adversely. Import and export of readymade garments and raw material during Covid-19 was low, factories had fired employees, not only PSU but private textile industries also closed down their factory units. The article highlights various issues faced by the textile sector like cash flow constraints, supply chain disruptions, consumer sentiments and also discusses the measures taken by the factories. Research highlights certain ways to tackle situations after Covid-19, few ways are like Pay Backing, GST discount etc. The study is mostly based on secondary data.

Md. Atiqur Rahman Khan et al (2021), conducted their study on 'Socio-economic conditions of rice-mills workers: A study on Sherpur district in Bangladesh'. The study was based on primary data. The Researchers had categorized data into two groups, viz., to interpret the collected data i.e. economic conditions and social situations. In order to conduct the research procedure, random sampling was used to collect data; an interview schedule containing both open and closed form questions was created to collect accurate and reliable information from the farmers. The outcome of the study indicates that employees earn a very low wage and there is an unfriendly working climate. In addition, there was no proper arrangement to resolve health, diet, pension & medical issues in the rice mills of Sherpur district.

Perumalsamy, G.(2022) in his study on “A Study on Impact of Employment on Women Workers of Textile Mills in Dindigul District Tamilnadu” attempts to study the current, demographic, socio and economic profile of the women workers in the textile mills; to assess the present socio and economic status of the women workers after joining in the textile mills; to examine the level of satisfaction and identify the challenges faced by women workers in the textile mills in the work environment; and to offer workable suggestions for enhancing the livelihood status of women workers in textile mills. The research has brought significant conclusions highlighting empowerment in socio-economic status of women because of employment in textile mills.

Mrs. R. Gayathri & Dr. M. Lakshmi (2021), conducted their study on ‘Impact of COVID-19 on Cotton Mills during Pandemic Period in Rajapalayam Town’. Some of the objectives to conduct the study were to identify the major business related issues faced by the Textile Entrepreneurs due to COVID-19 and to measure the level of stress experienced by the textile entrepreneurs due to Covid 19. Primary data has been used from the textile industry in Rajapalayam. Secondary data was collected from various journals, books and websites. Statistical tools such as percentage analysis and Friedman test were used. The issues studied through the representatives are inordinate responsibility, extra working hours, no addition and motivation given, bad climate offices etc. Working conditions as far as adaptability, responsibility and working hours need to be tuned so as to keep up balance between serious and fun activities is one of the suggestions.

Md. Mehedi Hasan Sikdar et al (2014), in his study on Socio-Economic Conditions of the Female Garment Workers in the Capital City of Bangladesh the socio-economic conditions of female garment workers in Dhaka City of Bangladesh. Socio economic factors selected for the study included age, level of education, marital status, family members, previous jobs, service length, migration status, religion, residence information, decision making power, medical facilities, reasons for absent in the workplace, transportation facilities, wage, overtime, maternity leave and child care facilities, income and expenses problems faced by them and related solutions. Simple statistical techniques like frequency distribution, percentage of frequency were used to analyze the collected data. The article has given some recommendations to improve the conditions of the women workers.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the condition of the women mill workers during the non-operational period of the mills
- To study the impact of non-operational status of mills on the wages of the women mill workers before and after the mills have been declared non-operational.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research article has used explanatory case study research design, and the interview schedule has been prepared using a questionnaire. The sampling technique used is purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is one done in a deliberate way, always with some focus or purpose in mind. Snowball sampling identifies cases of interest through an exchange of information between individuals, basically through the process of networking, one individual in the sample guiding the researcher to other ones in which the researcher is interested. Multiple-case study design has been used wherein women workers belonging to different mills are studied to check if the problem identified is common among all the women workers. Primary data is collected through the interview schedule by visiting the residential places of the women mill workers of Mumbai. The interview schedule has been prepared both in Marathi, the regional language and English. The Interview Schedule is composed using different scales like multiple choice and descriptive type. Data has been collected on the basis of qualitative as well as quantitative variables like age, education, skills learned, gender, income earned, experience etc.

### FINDING

The data highlights the fact that women workers have been harshly struggling to manage their regular expenditures on food, rent, managing children education, medical expenditures etc. as altogether their incomes have come down. Women workers have agreed that they had to seriously depend on borrowed funds like loans from provident funds or society. There was heavy dependence of women on society loan like for marriages, consumption, to pay rent. Men workers have asked their wives or children to go for a job to add up to the family income. Workers were able to meet their daily consumption expenditure by mortgaging gold ornaments, workers have shifted to their native places and did farming and other related activities to earn their livelihood. Some workers have permanently shifted to their villages since there was no hope of the mills to start again. Overall savings have also been wiped out since March 2020 the Mills have been non-operational. The female workers have opted out of some side jobs like toran making, tailoring work, tiffin service, working as house maids, domestic servants etc. to survive during this phase. The workers have been receiving 50% salary for the month. There was a common voice among the female workers on the wages like 50% wages were not disbursed on time once it started during non-operational period and sometimes wages were not paid if

documents were not in order. There have been cases of marriages getting postponed in the same period. After retirement, payment funds like gratuity were delayed. However, workers were relieved of the medical expenses as they had ESIC membership which took care of their operation costs. One of the common problems which most of them faced was their helplessness in joining private sector jobs as mill job did not allow them to join corporate jobs due to dual PF deductions.

### SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Mumbai had a major presence of mills covering vast pieces of land at a demanding location. The study would cover NTC mills across Mumbai. The study uses case study research design which includes a study of five female workers from different mills in Mumbai. The three mills which have been chosen for the study are TATA Mills, INDU Mills and Poddar mills from Mumbai District. The study will cover only women workers and the impact of the non-operational status of the mills on the women workers is studied. The women workers are selected randomly but who are married and have families to take care of in order to get a wide analysis. The study does not cover the mills of other states, only NTC mills non-operational in Mumbai are considered. The study will not consider issues of the private mills working in Mumbai. The study focuses on analysing the socio-economic aspects of the mill workers, hence political and cultural issues etc. will not be studied.

### CONCLUSION

Textile industry is playing a very significant role in employment generation, rural development and overall economy. As far as NTC mills are concerned, the workers have basic education and skills related to their job field only. Hence there is a serious issue which the govt would have to tackle if these mills are permanently shut down. There are more than 5000 workers engaged in these mills. The study highlights the plight of the workers especially the women workers being hit hard due to suspension of mills. It is quite obvious that the govt is seriously considering the employment issues that get generated with the mills being declared non-operational. Hence the government would devise a solution that can protect the mill workers.

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