



Available online at [www.jlls.org](http://www.jlls.org)

---

## JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTIC STUDIES

---

ISSN: 1305-578X

*Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(2), 1452-1457; 2021

# Livelihood Challenges Of Migrant Women Home-Based Garment Workers Of Tiruppur In Tamil Nadu

J. Indirani<sup>a</sup>, S.Suba<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Assistant Professor, Post Graduate & Research Department of Economics, Seethalakshmi Ramaswami College, Tiruchirappalli-620002, Tamil Nadu. Email id: [induramgru@gmail.com](mailto:induramgru@gmail.com)

<sup>b</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Women's Studies, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli. Email id: [drsubabdu@gmail.com](mailto:drsubabdu@gmail.com)

### APA Citation:

Indirani, J., Suba, S., (2021). Livelihood Challenges Of Migrant Women Home-Based Garment Workers Of Tiruppur In Tamil Nadu. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(2), 1452-1457.

Submission Date: 06/03/2021

Acceptance Date: 17/05/2021

---

### Abstract

Migration is a human mobility towards attaining socio-economic advancement as a result of poverty, unemployment, social conflict, communal tension and educational opportunities. Basically migration is meant for moving in search of livelihood and it takes place internally as within the domicile state and externally as outside the state which is known as inter-state migration. Migration refers to the movement of people from one place to another for seeking better economic condition and for improving their standards of livings. While seeing the interstate and intra-state migration in India 'feminization of migration' is now significantly increasing trend due to greater impact of structural changes in rural economy, after implementing New Economic Policies at the back drop of Globalization which impacted on Urbanization, shifting of workforce from agriculture to both organized and unorganized industry and tertiary activities, unemployment and searching of livelihood opportunities etc. In the recent past there are certain evidences surfacing on the public and academic domain that Women are outnumbered when compared to men in migration has been proved evidentially by NSSO, Census of India data and other academic institutions. Moreover, earlier female migration is connected with marriage now at present various international and national level research studies have identified that it is associated with family movements and primarily searching of employment opportunities for their livelihood. In the case of Tamil Nadu, it is noticed that out of every 100 migrants, 58 were female and 42 were male in the state. As a national average (census, 2001) data indicates among rural migrants out of every 100 total migrants 64 are female and 36 are male while in urban area the share of males being 48 out of 100 migrants. From different parts of Tamil Nadu people are migrating from rural to urban area particularly to Tiruppur which is situated in the Manchester region of Tamil nadu-the textile city of the state for searching employment/daily wage for livelihood options due to agricultural distress, unconditional unemployment and poverty in the native villages.

**Keywords:** Migration, Tiruppur, Globalization, Economic Policies, Textile City

---

## 1. Introduction

Majority of the migrant labourers in Tiruppur are working as long term temporary casual labourers and also they are moved with their family from southern districts of Tamil Nadu. In this pattern of migration,

Email id: [induramgru@gmail.com](mailto:induramgru@gmail.com)

women are migrated along with their family male members and children continuing- as mothers, wives to take care of their male members. Among them women those who are unable to work in textile industries directly as labourer because of their household responsibilities like caring for children, elders at home. It is also to be noted that biological reproduction i.e. pregnancy and taking participation in unskilled /semi skilled nature of employment market through doing the works like checking of finished hosiery products under piece rate wage at their homes as home-based workers along with their household chores.

Generally Home based workers are categorized into two: One is dependent workers who are paid at piece rates and usually produce for a subcontractor, or intermediary companies in a contract chain. Another category is independent or 'own-account' workers produce goods for direct sale through street stalls, roadside shops, or the local village. They themselves determine what products they make and where they sell them (Annie, Delaney, 2004). The development of ancillarisation and industrial employment through sub-contracting, stagnating and falling incomes of households due to liberalization, privatization and globalization of economy also leads to increased entry of women into the informal labour market and employment in the informal sector (Unni, Jeemol, 2001). Home-based work of various sorts appears to have increased with informalization of labour. This is partly because, in the context of increasing competition and the need for flexibility, home based workers are a flexible, dispensable, and cheap labour force whose invisibility makes it hard for them to demand higher wages, job security, or improvements in working conditions (Pearson, Ruth, 2004). These home based workers are even directly contributed garment based labour market they are invisible in labour market. They are not at all considered on par with other workers like regular, casual workers; since they are working at homes, even though they might have worked more than eight hours per day. Also the home based workers are completely omitted from the labour networks like unions, labour welfare benefits, security measures etc., but they are contributing their labour to the same companies based at their homes with help of middle men. However, these home based workers are contributing to household economy and market economy; their works are unrecognized sometimes derecognized due to their nature of work place. This paper attempts to explore the conditions, problems; challenges and need for inclusion with help primary data collected from forty migrant households' home-based workers who are paid piece rates in Tiruppur 'textile' city. Regarding methodology, exploratory research design is adopted to carry out this study. With the help of SAVE – a NGO working in Tiruppur for migrants in Textile sector, Trade Union –CITUC and the researcher has identified the households of women migrant home-based workers from Rakkiayapalayam, Golden Nagar, Saammundeeapuram and periyandipalyam which are these places dominated by the rural-urban migrants. By employing snowball sampling 40 households are selected for this study and primary data collected from the women home-based workers associated with garment industries. The researcher carried out this study to collect the data through using the interviews, observation and FGDs techniques. The collected data was analyzed qualitatively.

## **2. Background Profile of the Women Migrant Home-Based Workers**

The home based workers who participated in this study in Tiruppur are migrant workers associated with export garment industries. They are migrated mainly from the (Madurai, Theni, Sivaganga, Dindigul, Pudukottai, Viruthnagar and Thirunelveli) southern parts of Tamil Nadu along with their male family members like, husband, son and father by the joint decision taken by their family. They expressed that poverty, unemployment, agriculture failure, landlessness, debts, dislike to work as agricultural wage worker and lack of opportunity to get continuous employment in their native are the influencing factors to motivate their family to migrate to Tiruppur. Majority of the home based workers are under the productive age group ranging from 20 to 40 years. Very small number of home based workers fall under the age category of less than 20year and above 40years. While seeing the educational status of the migrant home based workers except (14%) fourteen percent of the home based workers remaining had completed their school education up to high school level. It shows that even educated they are unable to participate in any skilled work due their unskilled/untrained nature of education. Majority of the homeworkers belongs to Hindus - Backward castes, followed by Muslims, Christians and SC/ST castes are represented. Irrespective of their religious affiliation and caste background all are equally vulnerable to poverty and unemployment. Significant Proportion of home based workers married and living as

nuclear family is very higher than the home based workers living as single and joint family. Family size i.e. total member of home based workers shows that higher order of family size. Majority of them are having larger family size 3-6 members in their family. Very small number of home based workers is having small family i.e. 1-2 members just a couple. The average monthly income of almost all the home based worker is less than Rs.3000. The larger family size contributes to more numbers to actively participate in labour market in one way, and on the other hand it became a challenge to home based workers to meet the basic needs of households due to higher cost of living in Tiruppur.

### 3. Standard of Living

The dwelling status of migrant home based workers is not good when compared with living conditions in their native places. They said before migration they lived in owned spacious houses independently without the burden of house rent. But in Tiruppur, they are residing in the cluster houses which are a line of houses constructed in same structure with partitioned wall where the number of family members does not matter. Each cluster is consisting of 5-10 tiled semi-*pucca* houses. Also majority of the home based workers family are living in houses with one single room. They are using the same room in multiple purposes like cooking, eating, sleeping and other common purposes. The aeration of these houses is very bad just shake of name a small single windows are fixed in the structure. In many structures we can see the houses without windows. The ventilation is necessary for good health but the most of the home based workers are living with very poor ventilation also they have depended on electrical fan to whole day to get ventilation. Regarding the sanitation needs they stated that there are very few toilets constructed over there and all of them have to share same toilets and bath rooms those are not gender specific. One single bath room and toilet was used by 2-3 household. Since more than two households commonly used the toilets and bath rooms in morning hours, it is very difficult to cope-up with the emergency, to stick on their family members company working shifts. Particularly during the time menstruation water scarcity and lack privacy in using toilets for changing, washing and dispose pads/cloths most of the times it leads to mental stress. It is found that in certain clusters the toilets are under lock and key system in order to prevent the outsiders using the toilets. For that the home based workers explained that the owners of the houses used to keenly observe the tenants, number of times using toilets and warned for the same in considering the expenditure of septic tank maintenance. All the cluster houses we can see a separate constructed common washing stone in the street very close to drainage in front of the entrance, gateway of cluster where they wash their clothes and the queue system is maintained strictly. As far as fuel for cooking concern, all the home based workers are mostly relying upon LPG and kerosene. Even though they had the experience to use wood for cooking in their native without any financial burden, at present as it is not available in urban area like Tiruppur home based workers are compelled to spend certain amount of their monthly income to purchase the LPG cylinder. Moreover, water scarcity is a major problem in Tiruppur because of water pollution created by the textile bleaching and dyeing industries for more than three decades, the ground water got completely polluted. *Noyyal* River which is one of the important source for drinking water and irrigation has been polluted and has become irreversible, the people of textile city struggling to get safe drinking water. In case migrant home based workers though they are having water facility in their residential area through public taps due to improper distribution and insufficiency, these workers are under pressure to pay for getting water for both drinking and other common purposes. On an average, they have to spend Rs.20 per day to get *sappathanni* (salt water) to meet out other than drinking purpose like cleaning, bathing, washing and toilet needs. All the home based workers households have Television, Mixer, Grinder and Fan. Majority of them are availed these electronics goods through Tamil Nadu government's free supply scheme. The noted observation is that we can identify the reflections of globalization in their consumerist kind of life style in their dress, beautification, food habits and celebrating festivals like birth days, wedding anniversaries etc. The mobile phones and cable TV connectivity have become inevitable need in their life like food, shelter and cloths among migrant households. The practice of 'savings' of households of home based workers is almost nil, instead of that all the households have the debts in non-institutional financial sources like private money lenders. More than three-fourth of the households are having loans borrowed from private many lenders. Since they have been compelled to spent/purchase on all the basic necessities such as rent, electricity, fuel, water, essential commodities, their household income is insufficient to meet the basic requirements of the family. Hence they have borrowed loans

from private money lenders for higher interest to attend the certain immediate needs like medical, children's education and to do rituals and customary ceremonies in their native villages to fulfill the expectations of kith and kin. Poor living conditions, lack of social security measures, non-continuous employment to their family members, price rise of essential commodities, unbearable cost of educational, health, food expenditures and shelter and inadequate income are the issues made their livelihood throttled. The migrant home based workers sadly recorded that when compared to "our living condition is unsatisfactory in native villages; we are tolerating this kind of living just for survival of the existence, because we don't have any other viable livelihood options".

#### 4. Working Condition

Among the samples studied in home-based workers, majority of the workers did not have any experience and skills related to garment works. Very few home based workers have previous experience; they having already worked in garment industries, currently left from companies due to their pregnancy and child care. To support their family needs and cost of living in Tiruppur they are voluntarily involved in home-based wage work which is introduced by their family members working in garment industries, neighbours and middleperson. Poor ventilated and lightened 10x10 feet single room for the households is working place to them. After completion of all the household responsibilities, these home based workers tend to do their company works in remaining hours and whenever they found free time only they have done the company works. They have employment/orders an average 20 days per month. The home-based workers are involved in the works related in the stage of finishing like *pisiruvettuthal/paarthal* (checking the defects of finished garments), stitching buttons etc. They receive the orders or work assignments from the middleperson or subcontractors under piece rate and also the finished garments collected at their door steps by the same persons on daily basis. Regarding piece rate, it is based on the different types and design of the garments meant for elders and children. Per day they are capable of completing 150 to 400 pieces, this may increase according to their household workload, free time and nature of pieces. For example small garments like baby dresses they have completed up to 400 pieces, big garments like T-Shirts, nighties, inner-wears, tops and caps they have completed maximum 300 pieces. They are paid very cheap. It varies from size of the pieces, for small pieces 30 paise per piece and big pieces 50 paise per piece (averagely they have paid Rs.1-4 per dozen). Significant number of home based workers earned less than Rs.75 per day very rarely earned above Rs.100. The mode of payment to the home based worker is on weekly basis. Every week Saturday they have received their payment depends on the number of pieces/dozens completed in a week. Seeing home based workers occupational health all the workers are having both physical and mental health problems related to their work. Majority of the home based workers are suffered from eye irritation, Head ache, back pain, hip and body pain, tiredness, indigestion and stomach ulcers. Followed by the physical problems they reported that certain mental health problems such as depression, worries about continuous employment, emptiness, mental tiredness, angry and sleeplessness which affected their health. In addition to that they said the abovementioned health problems they never experienced before migrate to Tiruppur, all these occurred just because of their works related to company. Even though the home based workers contributing to so many companies export business they never considered themselves either as labour or part of production process. The home-based workers did not have any knowledge and information related to supply chain. As they contributed too many companies in Tiruppur authentically not at all they are connected with any company, have no identity card as garment workers, trade union member and completely cut off from the labour welfare and benefits of the companies like Provident Fund, ESI, bonus, medical assistance, identity cards, uniforms, maternity leave and accidental benefits etc. Moreover employers and subcontractors are benefited through this larger group of home-workers despite they are underpaid, alienated from labour market and labour rights without any social security measures.

#### 5. Conclusion

The women migrant home based worker are facing same problems which are faced by the general migrant textile company regular and casual workers as labour such as non-continuous employment, decreasing of orders, unguaranteed job, low/cheap wage, pressure to complete the task within the

scheduled period, but they are invisible as labour because they are doing garment works at homes. Also their works are undervalued and unrecognized since flexible, unskilled nature of works, timings and place. The home based garment workers are insensitive in recognizing themselves as labour in one hand and undue recognition of companies and general trade unions other hand this situation made them as strangers in labour market and supply chain. Power/electricity crisis, closure of dyeing units have been disturbed the textile business of Tiruppur irrespective of all the industries mainly small industries. This situation leads to downsizing and exploitation of labour especially making migrant as more vulnerable. The system of subcontracting in labour and works are increasing in trend whereas the continuous employment and numbers of regular/casual labourers are decreasing. At present the trend of using migrant workers from other than Tamil Nadu state and women home based workers for garment works needs is increasing in Tiruppur ever before. This kind of labour market trend and approaches became a challenge as well as threat to existing intra-state migrant garment workers and trade unions to ensure the labour rights, unionization and livelihood of migrants in general making home-based workers more voiceless and vulnerable in particular. As concerning women home-based workers participation in informal labour market has given way forward to women progressively in certain extent such as economically remunerative, taking intra household decisions, bargaining capacity, self-identity as worker but in the perspective of labour market they are as invisible victims of labour exploitation, unorganized, out or less coverage workers in international, national laws and trade unions. The feminization of home-based garment works in Tiruppur and its labour exploitative nature has reflects the similar macro trends of informalization women's labour market. However, the issues and challenges of home based workers are not significantly accounted in any micro and macro level census, labour welfare policies, programmes and legislative, prioritized or fore fronted by any state governments, political parties and trade unions except Home-based Workers Networks. Home-based workers are invisibly contributing more to economic development of household and nation. Why they are less accounted, ignored or missed from the larger spectrum of labour market debates? What prevents the trade union, industry, state and other institutions to take into their issues and needs in mainstream discussions whether their sex identity or gender insensitive approach of the researchers, policy makers and executives to view and deal in that issues? These are the most important issues to be addressed and to attend these issues with gender question to ensure their labour rights and livelihood of Women Migrant Home-based Workers in Tiruppur and other parts of the country.

## References

- Annie Delaney (2004), "Global Trade and Home Work: Closing the Divide", *Gender and Development*, Vol. 12, No. 2, Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd., pp. 22-28.
- Census of India (2001), "Migration Tables" Registrar General and Census Commissioner, Ministry of Home Affairs Government of India, New Delhi.
- Jayati Ghosh (2002), "Globalization, Export-Oriented Employment for Women and Social Policy: A Case Study of India", *Social Scientist*, Vol. 30, No. 11/12, Published by: Social Scientist, pp. 17-60.
- Jeemol Unni (2001), "Gender and Informality in Labour Market in South Asia", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 36, No. 26, Published by: Economic and Political Weekly, pp. 2360-2377.
- National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) (2010), "Migration in India: 2007-2008", Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, New Delhi: Government of India.
- Padmini Swaminathan (2009), "Outside the Realm of Protective Labour Legislation: Saga of Unpaid Labour in India", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 44, No. 44, Published by: Economic and Political Weekly, pp. 80-87.
- Paula Kantor (2002), "A Sectoral Approach to the Study of Gender Constraints on Economic Opportunities in the Informal Sector in India", *Gender and Society*, Vol. 16, No. 3, Sage Publications, Inc., pp. 285-302.
- Rosaria Burchielli, Annie Delaney, Jane Tate and Kylie Coventry (2009), "The FairWear Campaign: An Ethical Network in the Australian Garment Industry", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 90, Published by: Springer, pp. 575-588.

- Ruth Bergan (2009), “Women home-based workers organizing for economic rights: case studies from Bulgaria and Turkey”, *Gender and Development*, Vol. 17, No. 2, Published by: Taylor & Francis Ltd., pp. 219-229.
- Ruth Pearson (2004), “Organising Home-Based Workers in the Global Economy: An Action-Research”, *Development in Practice*, Vol. 14, No. 1/2, Published by: Taylor & Francis, pp. 136-148.
- Vinoj Abraham (2009), “Employment Growth in Rural India: Distress-Driven?”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 44, No. 16, Published by: Economic and Political Weekly, pp. 97-104.