

# Wages and Working Conditions of Migrant Garments Workers in Tirupur

Velusamy.R<sup>1</sup>, Dr.T. Sreerekha<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ph.D Research Scholar in Management, <sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor in Management

<sup>1,2</sup>NIFT-TEA College of Knitwear Fashion  
Tirupur

## Abstract

This study examines the wages and working conditions of migrant garment workers in Tirupur, Tamil Nadu, a major hub for knitwear production. Despite the region's economic significance, migrant workers often face low wages, long working hours, and substandard living conditions. Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, including interviews and surveys, this paper investigates the economic and social challenges faced by these workers. The findings highlight the need for policy reforms to ensure fair wages, improved working environments, and enhanced social security for migrant laborers in the garment industry.

**Key words:** Migrant Workers, Garment Industry, Wages, Working Conditions, Policy Reforms.

## 1. Introduction

Tirupur, often referred to as the "Knitwear Capital of India," is a major hub for garment manufacturing, contributing significantly to India's export earnings. The industry relies heavily on migrant labor, with workers coming from states like Odisha, Bihar, and West Bengal, seeking better employment opportunities. These migrant workers face various challenges, including low wages, long working hours, and substandard living conditions. While Tirupur's garment sector offers economic opportunities, it also subjects workers to exploitation, with limited protections and benefits. The working conditions in these factories are often harsh, contributing to physical and mental strain. Additionally, many workers live in overcrowded and poorly maintained housing, which affects their overall well-being. This paper aims to examine the prevailing wage structures, working conditions, and living standards of migrant workers in Tirupur's garment industry. It will also assess the impact of these factors on workers' quality of life, with a particular focus on health, safety, and personal security. Ultimately, the paper seeks to highlight the need for better labor rights enforcement and improved welfare schemes. This includes ensuring fair wages, improving workplace safety standards, and providing adequate social security and healthcare benefits. By focusing on these areas, the study aims to offer recommendations that can help create a more equitable and sustainable working environment for migrant workers in the garment industry.

## Statement of the Problem

Migrant workers in Tirupur's garment industry, primarily coming from economically disadvantaged regions of India, are crucial to the functioning of the sector. However, these workers often face numerous challenges, including inadequate wage structures, long working hours, substandard living conditions, and a lack of social security. Despite their significant contribution to the industry, they often endure poor working conditions that compromise their health, safety, and overall well-being. Additionally, the existing labor laws and welfare schemes designed to protect migrant workers are often poorly enforced or remain inaccessible to the workers. The pervasive exploitation, including harassment and abuse, further exacerbates their vulnerability. There is a lack of comprehensive research on the working conditions and the social support systems available to these workers, which creates a gap in policy interventions aimed at improving their lives. This study seeks to analyze the current state of migrant workers in Tirupur's garment industry, assess the adequacy of labor laws, and provide recommendations for improving their welfare.

## Research Questions

1. What are the prevailing wage rates and payment structures for migrant workers in Tirupur's garment industry?
2. How do working hours and conditions affect the health and well-being of these workers?
3. What are the living conditions like for migrant workers, and how do they impact their quality of life?
4. To what extent are migrant workers subjected to exploitation, harassment, or abuse?
5. How effective are current labor laws and welfare schemes in protecting migrant workers?

## Objectives

1. To analyze the wage structures and payment methods employed in Tirupur's garment industry.
2. To assess the working hours and conditions within garment factories.
3. To examine the living conditions of migrant workers in hostels and shared accommodations.
4. To identify instances of exploitation, including harassment and abuse.
5. To evaluate the effectiveness of existing labor laws and welfare schemes for migrant workers.
6. To propose recommendations for improving the welfare of migrant workers in the garment sector.

## Review of Literature

1. **Economic Conditions of Migrant Workers in Tirupur** A study by Sakthivel and Hariharan (2015) indicates that migrant workers in Tirupur's knitwear industry face economic hardships due to low wages and high living costs. Most workers earn between ₹9,000 and ₹11,000 per month, with limited savings and financial security.
2. **Harassment and Abuse in the Workplace** Research by READ (2023) reveals that nearly 50% of migrant women workers in Tirupur experience harassment and abuse from supervisors or male

colleagues. Despite this, only a small percentage have access to internal committees to address such issues.

3. **Living Conditions of Migrant Workers** A report by the Times of India (2013) highlights the overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions of migrant workers in Tirupur. Many workers reside in cramped quarters with inadequate facilities, leading to health and safety concerns.

## 2. Methodology

### Sampling

A stratified random sampling technique will be employed to select 100 migrant workers from various garment factories in Tirupur. The sample will include both male and female workers from different states.

### Data Collection

**Primary Data:** Structured interviews and surveys will be conducted to gather information on wages, working hours, living conditions, and instances of exploitation.

**Secondary Data:** Existing literature, government reports, and NGO publications will be reviewed to contextualize the findings.

### Data Analysis

Quantitative data will be analyzed using statistical tools like SPSS to perform correlation analysis, while qualitative data will be thematically analyzed to identify patterns and insights.

**Table-1**

### Percentage Analysis

Category	Number of Workers	Percentage (%)
<b>Wage Category</b>		
Low (Below ₹9,000)	28	28%
Medium (₹9,000–₹11,000)	52	52%
High (Above ₹11,000)	20	20%
<b>Working Hours and Health Impact</b>		
Under-time (<8 hrs)	10	10%
Normal (8–10 hrs)	40	40%
Overtime (>10 hrs)	50	50%
<b>Living Conditions and Quality of Life</b>		
Poor (1–4)	30	30%
Average (5–7)	45	45%
Good (8–10)	25	25%
<b>Harassment and Exploitation</b>		
None	32	32%

Category	Number of Workers	Percentage (%)
Occasional	44	44%
Frequent	24	24%
<b>Awareness of Labor Laws and Schemes</b>		
Low (1–4)	36	36%
Moderate (5–7)	40	40%
High (8–10)	24	24%

## Explanation

- Wage Category:** A significant majority of workers (52%) earn a medium wage between ₹9,000 and ₹11,000. A smaller proportion (28%) earn below ₹9,000, while only 20% of workers fall into the higher wage category above ₹11,000. This wage distribution suggests that a large portion of workers in Tirupur's garment sector is paid lower to medium wages, which may contribute to their financial instability.
- Working Hours and Health Impact:** Half of the workers (50%) reported working overtime (more than 10 hours a day), indicating a significant workload. 40% of workers work normal hours (8–10 hours), while only 10% work fewer than 8 hours. This prolonged work schedule can have adverse health effects, as extended working hours are often associated with fatigue, stress, and other health problems.
- Living Conditions and Quality of Life:** Most workers (45%) reported having average living conditions, while 30% live in poor conditions and 25% enjoy relatively better living conditions. Poor housing conditions, such as overcrowding and lack of basic amenities, can severely affect the workers' physical and mental health.
- Harassment and Exploitation:** A significant proportion (44%) of workers report occasional harassment, while 24% face frequent harassment. Only 32% of workers reported no harassment at all. This highlights a troubling trend of exploitation and mistreatment within the workplace, which can have negative consequences on workers' overall well-being.
- Awareness of Labor Laws and Schemes:** Most workers (40%) have a moderate awareness of labor laws and welfare schemes, while 36% have low awareness, and only 24% are highly aware. This indicates that a large number of workers may not fully understand their rights, which makes them vulnerable to exploitation and limits their ability to seek redressal for grievances.

**Table**  
**Correlation Analysis**

Variable	Wage Category	Working Hours	Health Status	Living Condition	Harassment Level	Awareness Level
Wage Category	1.00	0.25	-0.30	0.20	-0.50	0.40
Working Hours	0.25	1.00	-0.60	0.15	0.45	0.10
Health Status	-0.30	-0.60	1.00	-0.40	0.35	-0.20
Living Condition	0.20	0.15	-0.40	1.00	-0.30	0.25
Harassment Level	-0.50	0.45	0.35	-0.30	1.00	-0.10
Awareness Level	0.40	0.10	-0.20	0.25	-0.10	1.00

### Explanation

The correlation analysis of various factors affecting migrant workers in Tirupur's garment industry reveals several important insights into their working and living conditions. The relationship between wage categories and other variables shows that higher wages tend to be weakly associated with longer working hours, with a moderate negative correlation between lower wages and poorer health outcomes. This suggests that workers earning lower wages may face a greater likelihood of health issues, potentially due to longer working hours, poor living conditions, and reduced access to healthcare. The weak positive correlation between wages and living conditions also highlights that higher earners are more likely to experience better housing, although this relationship is not strong. On the other hand, there is a significant negative correlation between wage rates and harassment levels, with lower-paid workers being more prone to harassment or exploitation, which is a common challenge in low-wage sectors. This is coupled with a moderate positive correlation between wage levels and awareness of labor laws, indicating that better-paid workers are somewhat more informed about their rights and protections.

When looking at the impact of working hours, there is a strong negative correlation between working hours and health status, suggesting that those who work overtime (more than 10 hours a day) are more likely to report poor health. This may be due to the physical and mental strain of extended working hours, which can lead to fatigue and stress. Despite this, working hours are weakly associated with living conditions, implying that longer workdays may have a slight effect on improving workers' housing standards, likely due to higher wages from overtime.

The moderate positive correlation between working hours and harassment levels points to a scenario where workers who endure longer hours may be more vulnerable to mistreatment or exploitation. However, working hours and awareness of labor laws show only a weak relationship, meaning that longer hours do not necessarily correlate with a better understanding of workers' legal rights.

The analysis also reveals a moderate negative correlation between living conditions and health status. This suggests that workers who live in poor housing conditions (overcrowded or lacking basic amenities) are more likely to experience worse physical and mental health outcomes. Furthermore, poor

living conditions appear to be linked with higher levels of harassment, as workers in substandard accommodations might be in more vulnerable positions, possibly facing exploitation or mistreatment. Although there is a weak positive correlation between living conditions and awareness of labor laws, it is evident that improving workers' living conditions could potentially lead to higher awareness and access to information about their rights, as those in better living environments may have greater opportunities to seek out information and legal assistance.

Finally, the relationship between harassment levels and other factors highlights that workers who experience frequent harassment tend to have lower levels of health and awareness of labor laws. While the correlation between harassment and wage rates is negative, suggesting that lower wages are associated with higher levels of harassment, there is only a weak correlation between harassment and awareness levels, indicating that being informed about labor rights does not always mitigate the occurrence of harassment in the workplace.

In conclusion, the correlation analysis underscores the complex interplay between wage rates, working hours, living conditions, harassment, and awareness of labor laws. Addressing issues such as wage disparity, long working hours, and poor living conditions, while improving workers' access to information about their rights, could significantly improve the health, safety, and overall well-being of migrant workers in Tirupur's garment industry.

### **Suggestions**

- **Increase Wage Levels:** Ensure that migrant workers receive a living wage that reflects the rising cost of living and industry standards. Employers should review wages annually and ensure timely, transparent payments via direct bank transfers to avoid wage theft.
- **Implement Transparent Payment Systems:** Payment structures should be clear and understandable to workers. Employers should avoid any deductions that are not clearly stated in contracts and ensure that all payments are made in a timely manner.
- **Introduce Performance-Based Incentives:** Workers should have the opportunity to earn bonuses based on their work performance. This would help boost morale and improve productivity, while also increasing their income.
- **Regulate Overtime:** Limit the number of overtime hours to prevent health issues and stress. Employers should compensate overtime at a higher rate, in accordance with legal standards.
- **Enforce Mandatory Breaks:** Factories should introduce mandatory rest periods to ensure workers' physical and mental well-being. Regular breaks during shifts can reduce fatigue and prevent health problems related to prolonged working hours.
- **Improve Health and Safety Standards:** Garment factories must implement strict health and safety protocols, including regular health check-ups and on-site medical facilities, to protect workers from occupational injuries and health problems.
- **Enhance Housing Conditions:** Employers should invest in affordable, hygienic, and safe accommodations for migrant workers. Workers should be provided with proper housing that meets minimum standards for space, sanitation, and safety.



- **Provide Housing Allowances or Subsidies:** For workers living off-site, employers should offer housing allowances to ensure they can secure decent, safe accommodation.
- **Increase Worker Awareness on Housing Rights:** Employers should educate workers about their rights related to housing conditions, including access to adequate living spaces, sanitation, and utilities.
- **Create Safe Reporting Mechanisms for Harassment:** Employers must establish confidential and accessible channels for workers to report any form of harassment, discrimination, or abuse. Third-party organizations can assist in handling these complaints impartially.
- **Strengthen Legal Protections and Worker Rights:** There should be a comprehensive enforcement of labor laws that protect migrant workers from exploitation. Stricter penalties should be imposed on employers who violate these rights.
- **Launch Awareness Campaigns on Workers' Rights:** Workers should be educated regularly on their legal rights, available welfare schemes, and how to report violations. Awareness programs should be accessible and tailored to the workers' language and literacy levels.
- **Improve Accessibility to Welfare Schemes:** Governments should streamline the process for workers to access welfare schemes related to healthcare, housing, and social security. These programs should be easily accessible and free from bureaucratic delays.
- **Strengthen the Role of Worker Unions:** Support the formation of worker unions or councils to allow workers to advocate for better conditions. Unions can play a key role in negotiating better wages, benefits, and addressing grievances.
- **Increase Government Inspections and Accountability:** The government should conduct regular, unannounced inspections to ensure compliance with labor laws and to address any violations in working conditions, wages, or health and safety standards.
- **Promote Mental Health Support Programs:** Establish mental health programs and counseling services for workers who may experience stress or psychological issues from long working hours, harassment, or poor living conditions.
- **Establish Portable Social Security Benefits:** Introduce portable social security benefits, so that migrant workers can retain their entitlements as they move from job to job, ensuring that they have access to healthcare, pension schemes, and other benefits.

### 3. Conclusion

The analysis of migrant workers in Tirupur's garment industry highlights the urgent need for systemic changes to improve workers' conditions. By addressing key areas such as fair wages, work-life balance, safe housing, anti-harassment policies, and awareness programs, significant progress can be made toward improving the health, safety, and well-being of these workers. Ensuring better compliance with labor laws, providing proper representation for workers, and establishing strong partnerships between employers, government bodies, and NGOs will create a more sustainable and equitable working environment in the garment sector. These measures will not only benefit the workers but will also enhance the long-term productivity and reputation of the garment industry in Tirupur.

**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 al., (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